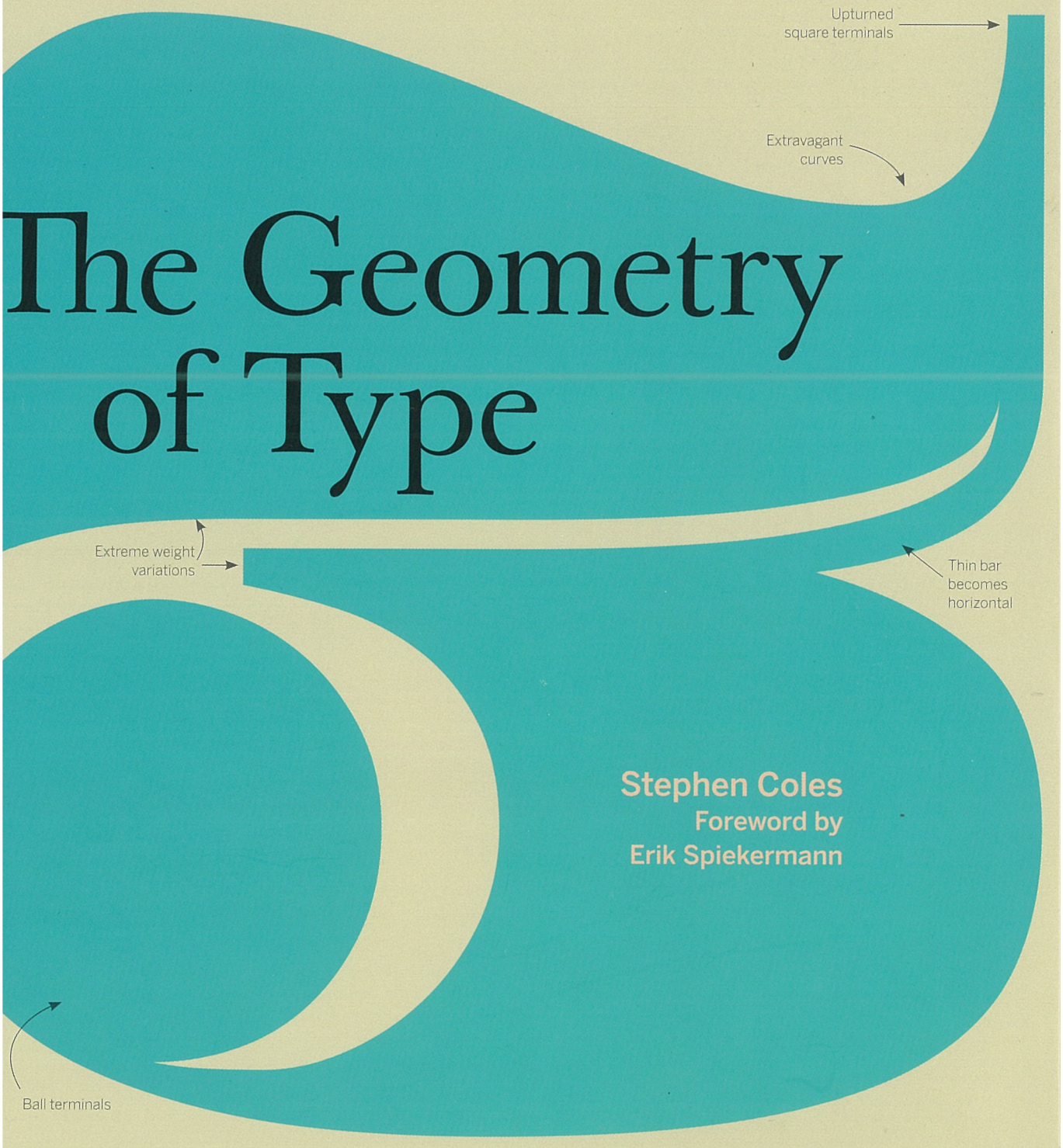

The Geometry of Type

Stephen Coles
Foreword by
Erik Spiekermann

The Anatomy of 100 Essential Typefaces

ames & Hudson

The Geometry of Type

The Anatomy of 100 Essential Typefaces

Stephen Coles
Foreword by Erik Spiekermann

The Geometry of Type is the ultimate guide to the intricacies of typeface design. It explores 100 traditional and modern typefaces in loving detail, with a full spread devoted to each entry. Characters from each typeface are enlarged and annotated to reveal key features, anatomical details, and the finer, often-overlooked elements of type design. The book also shows how these attributes affect mood and readability. Sidebar information lists the designer and foundry, the year of release and the different weights and styles available, and feature boxes explain the origins and best uses for each typeface, such as whether it is suitable for running text or as a display font for headlines. To help you spot each typeface in the wider world, the full character set is shown, and the best letters for identification are highlighted.

A beautiful and highly practical work of reference for font spotters, designers and users, *The Geometry of Type* is a close-up celebration of typefaces and great type design.

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The Geometry of Type

Stephen Coles
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The Anatomy of 100 Essential Typefaces

Thames & Hudson

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Foreword

The bigger a group gets, the lower its intellectual common denominator falls. The average taste of a group is definitely worse than that of any individual member. One can always see this at board presentations, where the propensity to make decisions is affected by the group size. If a group discussion had a colour, it would be beige.

If that group had to pick a typeface, it would be Arial – a face whose astonishing prevalence is largely due to its astonishing prevalence. We like best what we see most, which describes a type designer's dilemma: a new typeface has to look like all the others – after all, an 'a' has to look like an 'a' – but it has to also have something more. Gimmicks don't work, as they wear off quickly, and basing a whole alphabet on one idea also doesn't fly. This is painfully apparent, for example, in a page set in Avant Garde Gothic, whose geometric shapes separate characters from each other rather than combine them into words. The flow of the letters is important: they have to be modest in each other's company so we can read line after line of them. Details that stick out at large sizes may become invisible as the type gets smaller, but they can add warmth, texture and, yes, character. Type adds the sound to the tunes other people write.

As most users of type are unaware of the fact that type designers even exist, they take it for granted that fonts live on their computers, having got there by some technical intervention or other. For those people, selecting the right typeface is easy: just pull down the menu in your favourite application and click on one of the many popular names that come up. The more familiar these names look, the less likely you are to make a mistake. For those who are a little more interested in what actually makes a typeface useful, even appropriate, advice is easily had from the columns of so-called specialist magazines and websites. But their advice is commonly safe and staid. Security means hiding among the crowd.

If you want to go beyond the beige choices, you need objective criteria that can make finding the right typeface for a project not only likely but even fun. Stephen Coles is one of those people who, like myself, suffers from Typomania – that incurable but non-lethal disease that makes you read type specimens instead of popular literature. Stephen also has a typographic memory: he not only remembers what he has seen in those specimens – be they books or websites – but he also recalls the names of thousands of typefaces and can point anybody who asks to the proper reference point. Scary, I know, but useful for those who really want and need to go beyond what that drop-down menu offers at first sight.

If you know the difference between a font and a typeface, you need this book. If you don't, you need it even more.

Erik Spiekermann

Introduction

This book is all about looking at letters. Not just any letters, but the sets of letters that are designed together, in a systematic and harmonious way, to form a typeface.

What gives a typeface its personality? Why does one font appear bigger or clearer or darker or warmer than another? The answers to these questions can often be found by simply looking more closely at the letters themselves.

The performance of a Text typeface is best judged by viewing it – and using it – at its intended size in a passage of text. But just as typography (the use of type) is all about fussing over the details, the details of the typefaces themselves really do matter. Let's put it another way: a chef doesn't need to grow her own vegetables or raise her own cattle, but she can benefit from knowing how the ingredients were made.

When we enlarge a word or phrase that contains a typeface's most distinctive glyphs, we unearth all sorts of information about what makes that typeface tick. We discover how the space inside and between letters is as important as the strokes of the letters themselves, and how the shape of one letter affects the shape of the others. We learn that seemingly minor attributes can affect the personality of the typeface as a whole, and we can surmise the decisions a type designer made to improve the economy, legibility or originality of the design.

Once this knowledge is acquired, it becomes a valuable and instantly accessible piece of a type user's skill set. Graphic designers who can scrutinise and describe type's nuances are better equipped to pick the right tool for the job and discuss those choices with colleagues and clients.

In the following pages you'll find visual and interpretive descriptions of one hundred typefaces. The selections were made with an emphasis on versatility and practical use. There are certainly more popular typefaces out there, or those with a more historically significant background, but each of the families represented here is relevant and useful in contemporary design. There is a mix of 'classics', based on metal typefaces dating back as far as five hundred years, alongside newer releases that are either thoughtful reinterpretations of the classics or completely original designs. A glossary is included on page 9 to help you with some of the most frequently used terms.

While the focus is on Text type, there are also Display faces for setting large and grabbing attention. These were not chosen as mere novelties, but rather for their flexibility of use in a wide variety of settings.

The selections represent a wide range of foundries and designers from around the world, and every typeface was vetted for quality and design integrity. They are organised in a pragmatic way, sorted in groups that borrow some aspects from traditional, history-based classifications but without relying too heavily on dated dogma. Typefaces with similar visual characteristics are placed near each other, making it easy to compare designs and seek alternatives.

How to Use This Book

1. Typeface name
The typeface is the design of a full family of fonts. Variants, such as optical sizes (Display/Text), are noted where necessary below each sample. Digital formats (such as Pro and Std) are omitted because they generally specify a font product's character set, not the design of the typeface.

2. Designer, Foundry, Country of origin, Release year and Classification
The designer(s) of the typeface are credited as per the publishing foundry. For revivals, the designer of the original typeface is noted in parentheses.

The foundry is listed as per the publisher of the specific typeface shown. There may be versions of the typeface published by other foundries.

The country of origin gives a broad indication of where the typeface was developed.

The date indicates when the typeface was released, or in some cases designed. Multiple years indicate the release of variants or extensions. For revivals, the original design's estimated release is displayed in parentheses.

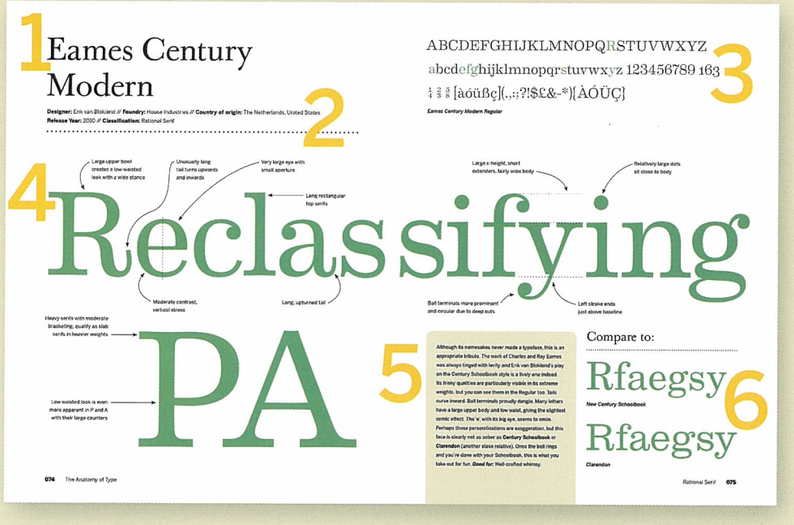
The classification is listed as specified by this book's system. In some cases, a more specific subclass is noted.

3. Character set
An overview of the basic characters (uppercase, lowercase, numerals, and punctuation) in the specified font. Most fonts contain many more characters than are shown here. The specific font style used for the anatomy graphic is noted and distinctive glyphs are highlighted.

4. Anatomy graphic
A few of the typeface's most distinctive glyphs and their distinguishing attributes. Sample words are generally from the language associated with the origins of the typeface.

5. Description
Brief notes about the background and overall character of the typeface, including thoughts about how the attributes highlighted in the anatomy graphic affect the design as a whole. Suggestions for best use are occasionally included.

6. Comparable typefaces
Similar typefaces used in this book are shown with the sample glyphs for easy comparison. Familiar typefaces that are not given a spread in this book are also included, suggesting possible alternatives to overused type.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Eames Century Modern
Designer: Erik van Blokland // Foundry: House Industries // Country of origin: The Netherlands, United States
Release Year: 2010 // Classification: Rational Serif
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Eames Century Modern Regular
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Although its namesakes never made a typeface, this is an appropriate tribute. The work of Charles and Ray Eames was always tinged with levity and Erik van Blokland's play on the Century Schoolbook style is a lively one indeed. Its finely quaintness are particularly visible in its extreme weights, but you can see them in the Regular too. Tails curve inward. Ball terminals proudly dangle. Many letters have a large upper body and low waist, giving the slightest comic effect. The 'e' with its big eye, seems to smile. Perhaps these personifications are exaggeration, but this face is clearly not as sober as Century Schoolbook or Clarendon (another close relative). Once the ball rings and you're done with your Schoolbook, this is what you take out for fun. Good fun! Well-crafted whimsy.
Compare to:
6
Rfaegsy
New Century Schoolbook
Rfaegsy
Clarendon
Large upper bowl creates a low-waisted look with a wide stance
Unusually long tail turns upwards and inwards
Very large eye with small aperture
Long rectangular top serifs
Large x-height, short extenders, fairly wide body
Relatively large dots sit close to body
Moderate contrast, vertical stress
Long, upturned tail
Ball terminals more prominent and circular due to deep cuts
Left strains ends just above baseline
Heavy serifs with moderate bracketing, quality as slab serifs in heavier weights
Low-waisted look is even more apparent in P and A with their large counters
076 The Anatomy of Type
Rational Serif 075

Glossary of Typographic Terminology

This book avoids esoteric lingo whenever possible, but specialised words can be useful for clearly and concisely describing type. Whether you are new to design or a practised professional, this list will be a helpful refresher as you read the following pages.

Aperture: The opening of a counter to the exterior of a glyph (see page 10).

Bracket: A curved or diagonal transition between a serif and main stroke (see page 10).

Character: The basic unit of written language. Can be a letter, a number, a punctuation mark or another symbol (see *Glyph*).

Counter: Any interior shape of a glyph. It can be completely enclosed by strokes, such as the eye of an 'e', or have an opening to the exterior, such as the lower counter of an 'e' (see page 10).

Cursive: A style associated with handwriting, typified by slanted stems with curved tails.

Font: A collection of glyphs. The font is the delivery mechanism, represented by a digital file or a set of metal pieces, for a typeface (see *Typeface*).

Foundry: A company that designs, manufactures and/or distributes fonts.

Glyph: The graphical representation of a character. A font can contain several glyphs for each letter – a lowercase 'a' and small cap 'A', for example – and can also have alternate forms, such as single- and double-storey 'a's or an 'a' with a swash tail. In this way, a single character can be represented by different glyphs (see *Character*).

Humanist: A method of letter construction tied to handwritten strokes made with a pen or brush (see *Rational*, and also page 14).

Ligature: A single glyph made of multiple characters. The most common examples are functional (Standard), such as 'fi', which is designed to resolve excessive spacing or an unpleasant overlap of two letters. There are also ornamental (discretionary) ligatures, such as 'st', that are primarily a stylistic option.

Rational: A method of letter construction using shapes that are drawn as opposed to written (see *Humanist*, and page 15).

Sans serif: A character or typeface without serifs (see page 13).

Serif: A small mark or 'foot' at the end of a stroke. Serifs are lighter than their associated strokes (see page 12).

Slab serif: A heavy serif, typically rectangular in shape, with a blunt end. It is also a typeface classification (see page 13).

Stroke: An essential line or structural element of a glyph. The term derives from the stroke of a pen (see page 11).

Stroke contrast: The weight difference between light and heavy strokes (see page 11).

Style: A stylistic member (e.g. bold, italic, condensed) of a typeface family, typically represented by a separate font.

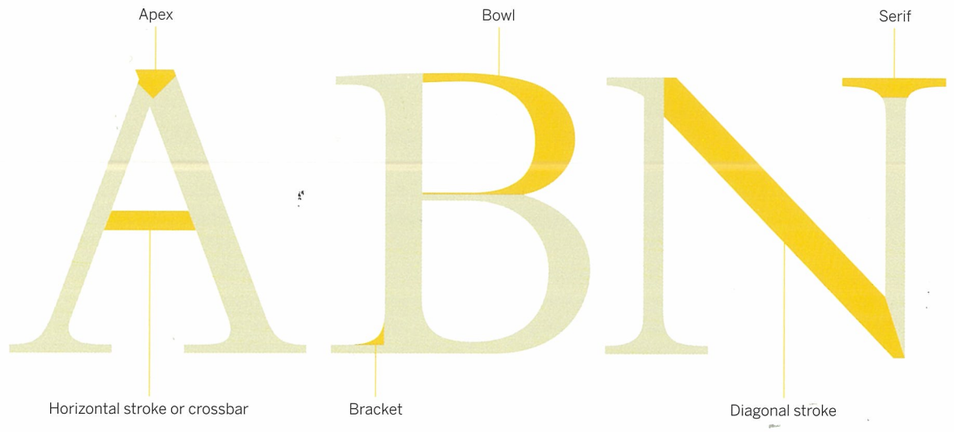
Substrate: The surface material on which type appears. For hundreds of years, type was printed on paper. Now it is increasingly rendered on the digital screens of desktop computers, tablets, and mobile phones.

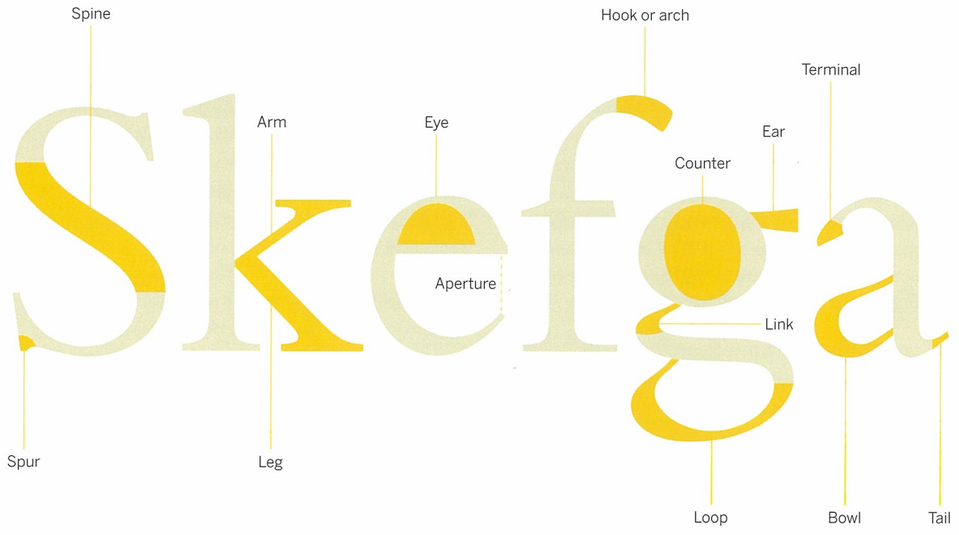
Swash: The extension of a stroke or prominent ornamental addition to a glyph, typically used for decorative purposes.

Typeface: The design of a set of characters. In simple terms, the typeface is what you see and the font is what you use.

Weight: The thickness of a stroke. In type design, the geometry of a line (or shape) is usually described using the terminology of weight.

The Anatomy of Type

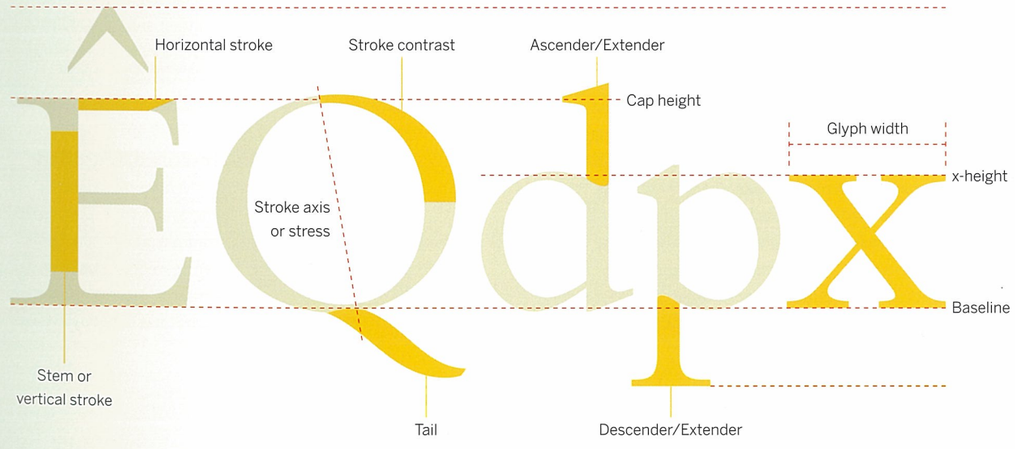




Just like the human body, the Latin alphabet can take on a surprising range of shapes and proportions. These varieties can come from diverging historical paths, differences in language or culture, or simply the tool used to make the letters – whether it's a pen, a chisel, or a compass.

But there are enough constants in roman (upright) letterforms that a standard vocabulary can label its parts. Using terms that are familiar to everyone who knows basic human anatomy, we can describe and compare typefaces. For example, most roman-based typefaces have an uppercase 'R' with a leg. Some legs are perfectly straight, some are bowed, some have an undulating curve, and some end with a 'foot' (or serif) on the ground (baseline). Each of these characteristics can contribute to the overall appearance of a typeface – how it changes the look of a word, a paragraph or a page. And, just as importantly, they can be functional characteristics, telling us what a typeface is capable of.

There are many terms relating to type anatomy that have the same meaning across the typographic community. Chances are, when you say 'leg', or 'serif', or 'baseline', everyone will know exactly what you mean. But there are other terms, the definitions of which vary, and there are designers and writers who will use different words for the same part of a letter. For this book, we use terms that are as widespread and common as possible, and that help us identify the distinguishing parts of each typeface.



Type Classification at a Glance

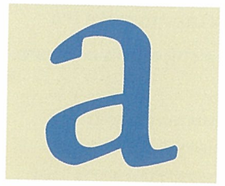
The typefaces in this book are arranged by classification. This makes similar designs easier to compare and introduces a vocabulary that will not only make you sound smart at parties, but will also help you identify, select and combine typefaces.

But first, a warning: there is no universal classification system. Just like any attempt to apply a set of genres to creative work, be it music, literature or art, typeface classification is inherently problematic. After all, type is not biology – a typeface doesn't have a genetic code like plants or birds do.

That doesn't mean people haven't tried to create some order from the chaos. Scholars and typographic associations have been inventing new classification systems for nearly one hundred years. Still, all of them are fraught with contradictions and controversy. These diverse bundles of letterforms simply have too many subtle variations and too few constants. And once you think you've corralled them into clear, distinguishable groups, a new typeface or style comes along that doesn't fit in any of your bins.

Most classification systems avoid this problem by associating classifications with historical periods. While this is a good way to categorise many of the typefaces from the past, chronological methods become impractical when it comes to contemporary design. Art critics know this problem all too well: what comes after *post-modern*? *Post-post-modern*?

So, while there are the unavoidable links to history, we arranged the typefaces here into groups that are more closely tied to visual appearance. One could argue with any of these labels or sorting decisions – don't be surprised if someone at your party balks when you describe Bodoni as *Rational*, not *Modern* – but hopefully it makes the selections easier to navigate and gives a good sense of the variety of type available. Armed with this knowledge, you can more articulately describe typefaces, draw comparisons and decide which are the right ones for the job.



Humanist Serif
Very calligraphic, with a consistent stress angle and moderate stroke contrast. Bracketed, often asymmetrical serifs.

Transitional Serif
Slightly calligraphic, with variable stress angle and usually more stroke contrast. Bracketed serifs and bulbous terminals.

Rational Serif
A regularised structure with vertical stress and moderate to high stroke contrast. Some typefaces have thin, unbracketed serifs. Ball terminals.

Contemporary Serif
Styles vary but most have a large x-height, low stroke contrast and large chunky serifs. Very open apertures.

Inscribed/Engraved
Derived from chiselled or engraved letters. Low stroke contrast is common. Serifs can be wedge-shaped or similar to those of Humanist. Some have flared terminals.

Grotesque Sans
Similar in structure to Transitional or Rational Serif typefaces. Low stroke contrast and fairly regular proportions. Round shapes are often oval, not circular.

Neo-Grotesque Sans
Like Grotesque, but with more homogenous forms. Minimal stroke contrast. Closed apertures and horizontal terminals. Round shapes are more circular.

Gothic Sans
American variant of the Grotesque style, with simpler, more static forms. Usually with a large x-height, low stroke contrast, and condensed width.

Geometric Sans
Static and clinical. Constructed of shapes that are nearly circular or square. Minimal stroke contrast.

Humanist Sans
Counterpart to Humanist Serif. Calligraphic in structure, often with higher stroke contrast than other sans serifs. Open apertures.

Neo-Humanist Sans
Contemporary evolution of Humanist Sans. Larger x-height. Very open apertures. Usually less stroke contrast.

Grotesque Slab
Similar forms to Grotesque sans serifs but with heavy rectangular slab serifs. Closed apertures. Ball terminals are common.

Geometric Slab
Similar forms to Geometric sans serifs but with unbracketed rectangular slab serifs about the same weight as stems.

Humanist Slab
Similar forms to Humanist sans serifs but with unbracketed rectangular or wedge-shaped slab serifs.

Script
Any typeface that emulates handwriting, whether connected cursive or informal print.

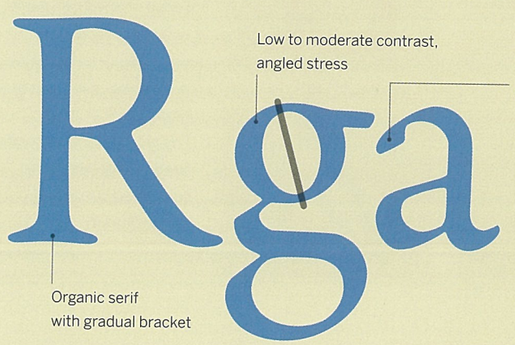
Key Classification Features

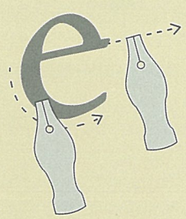
The following examples indicate the key features that inform each typeface classification and will help you to identify which category a newly encountered typeface may belong to.

Humanist Serif

Typeface shown: Garamond Premier

The first roman typefaces following centuries of handwritten forms, Humanist serifs have close ties to calligraphy. An oblique stress, gradually modulating from thick to thin, shows evidence of a pen held at a consistent angle. That angle is often echoed in letters topped with calligraphic terminals and finished with asymmetrical serifs that gently transition from the stem.



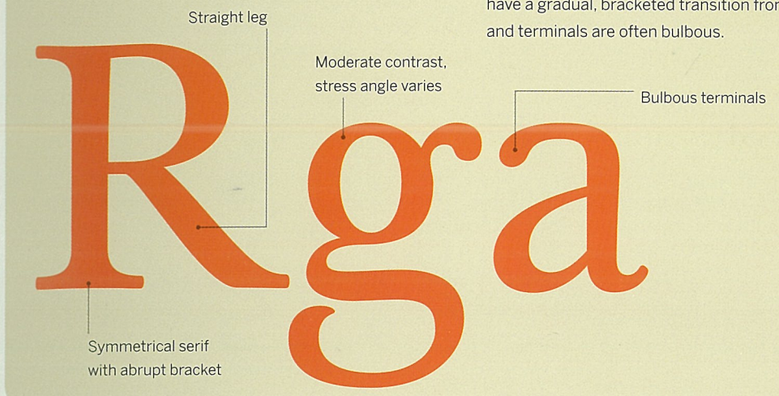


Humanist letters were initially written with a broad-nib pen held at a consistent angle. The weight of each stroke is determined by the stroke's direction. This is known as 'translation'.

Transitional Serif

Typeface shown: Baskerville 10

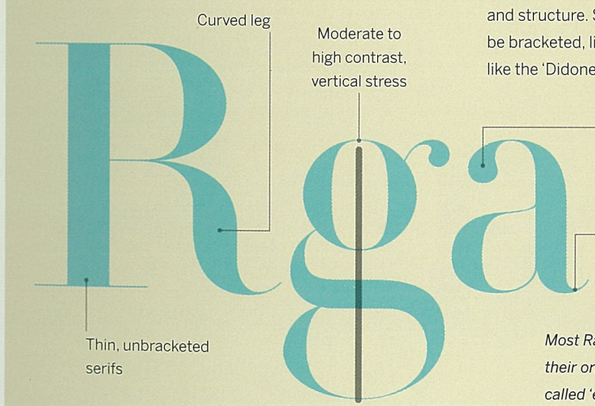
As we move further away from type's calligraphic roots, contrast increases and the stress axis turns more upright and variable within each typeface rather than staying consistent as it does in the Humanist serifs. Letters in these typefaces are more regular in shape and proportion and apertures are slightly smaller. Transitional serifs still have a gradual, bracketed transition from the stem, and terminals are often bulbous.

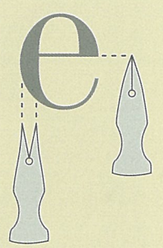


Rational Serif

Typeface shown: H&FJ Didot

At the opposite end of the spectrum from the Humanists, Rational serifs have a strong, vertical contrast between thick vertical stems and fine horizontal hairlines. Because these typefaces are not so much written as 'constructed', their letterforms are very even in proportion and structure. Serifs are generally symmetrical, and can be bracketed, like Melior and Miller, or thin and abrupt, like the 'Didones' (Bodoni and Didot).



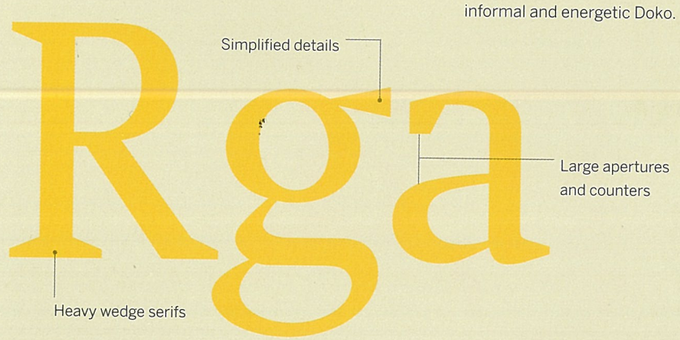


Most Rational typefaces are drawn, not written, but their origins still come from the pen. Using a method called 'expansion', stroke weight is defined by the pressure applied to a pointed pen.

Contemporary Serif

Typeface shown: Neue Swift

In the last forty years, type designers have borrowed the most pragmatic aspects of the previous styles to develop a new breed of highly functional Text faces, designed to solve the problems of various substrates and reading environments. These designs generally sport a much larger x-height and lower stroke contrast than traditional serif typefaces, but are otherwise not directly related. They range from the spatially economical Swift to the informal and energetic Doko.



Inscribed/Engraved

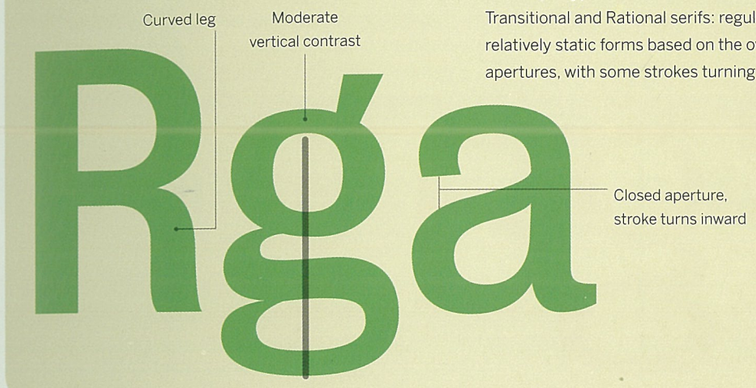
Typeface shown: Albertus

Unlike the other serif styles, derived from the stroke of a pen or brush, the typefaces in this category have a closer relationship to letters that are carved or chiselled from stone (also known as Glyphic), or engraved on a hard surface like copper or steel. These typefaces can end their 'strokes' with long, graceful serifs (Trajan), sharp wedge serifs (Modesto) or no serif at all, but a thickening flare instead (Albertus).

Grotesque Sans

Typeface shown: Bureau Grot

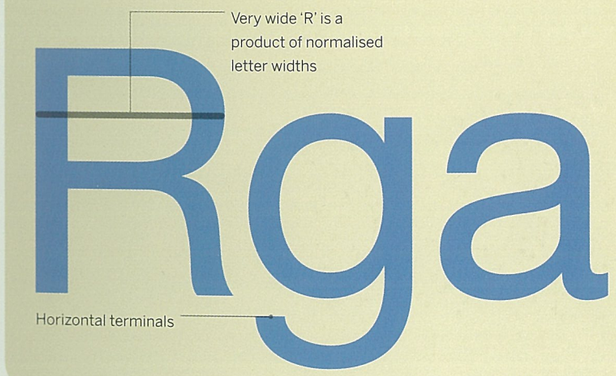
When sans serif printing type first appeared in the early to mid-1800s, some found the style so strange they called it 'grotesque'. These typefaces kept the nickname even after they gained popularity and Grotesque (or Grotesk in German-speakers) is now associated with any sans serif in this early style. The characteristics of Grotesque typefaces are similar to those of the Transitional and Rational serifs: regular proportions, relatively static forms based on the oval and fairly closed apertures, with some strokes turning inward.



Neo-Grotesque Sans

Typeface shown: Neue Helvetica

Neo-Grotesques (Neo-Grotesk in German-speaking parts of Europe) are even more rationalised extensions of the Grotesque style. These typefaces, pioneered by Helvetica and Univers, have very little stroke contrast, horizontal terminals and quite closed apertures. Their homogenised forms are graphically appealing at large sizes, so they often fare better in Display settings.



Gothic Sans

Typeface shown: News Gothic

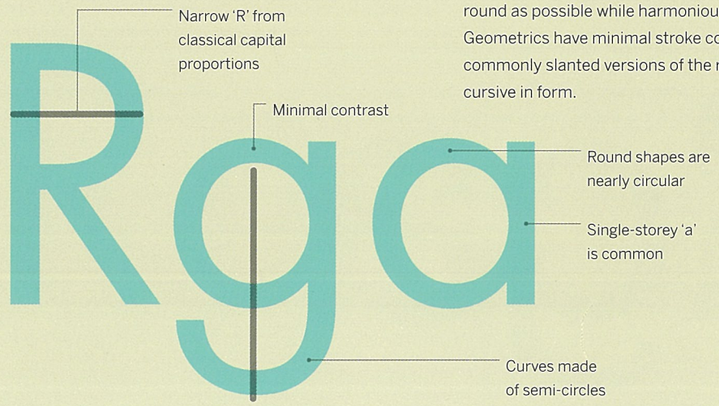
Some English and American variants of the Grotesque style are known as Gothics. While the differences are sometimes in name alone, there are a few distinctions that can be drawn (at least from the selections in this book). These include a large x-height, forms that are simpler and more static, very low contrast, and often a condensed width with an upright stance derived from flat-sided rounds. Typefaces like DIN – designed by engineers for industrial use – could be considered Geometric sans serifs but also share many traits with these Gothics.

Straight leg
Minimal contrast, vertical stress
Rga
Simple double-storey 'a' with diagonally orientated bowl and no tail
'g' is commonly a binocular form

Geometric Sans

Typeface shown: Futura ND

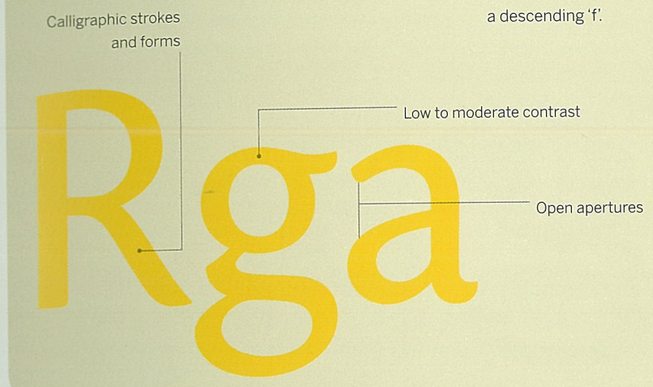
The most static and clinical of all the classifications, Geometric sans serifs are 'constructed' out of geometric forms with round parts that are circular or square. It's important to note that, while shapes like the 'o' appear to be exactly round, most proper typefaces do not contain perfect circles, but are optically corrected to appear as round as possible while harmonious with other letters. Geometrics have minimal stroke contrast, and italics are commonly slanted versions of the romans rather than cursive in form.



Humanist Sans

Typeface shown: Cronos

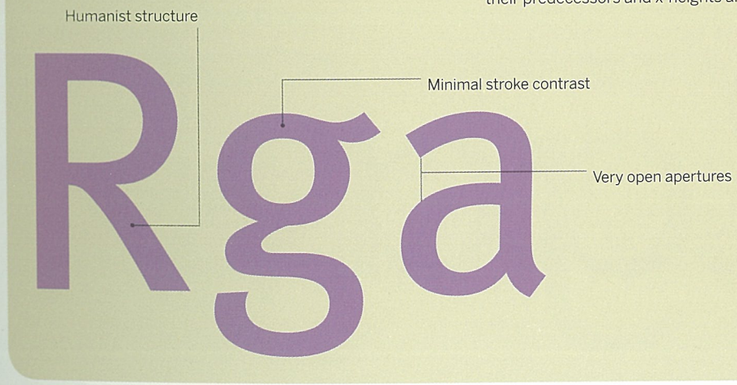
Like their serif counterparts, Humanist sans serifs have roots in calligraphy. Their round, dynamic, open forms have higher stroke contrast than the other sans serif classifications (though not as much as most serifs). These typefaces sometimes share the binocular 'g' and variable letter widths of their serif sisters. Their italics are 'true italics' with cursive forms of 'a', 'g', 'e', and sometimes a descending 'f'.



Neo-Humanist Sans

Typeface shown: FF Meta

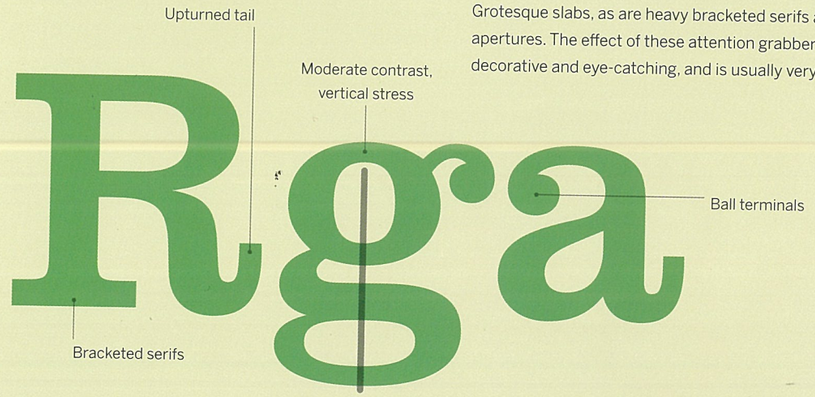
The digital era gave birth to new sans serifs that share characteristics with other classifications but are individual enough to deserve a label of their own. Many of these have a dynamic structure that could be considered an evolution of the Humanist sans, but stroke contrast is reduced and apertures are even more open. The round shapes of typefaces in this category tend to be more square than their predecessors and x-heights are larger on the whole.



Grotesque Slab

Typeface shown: Clarendon

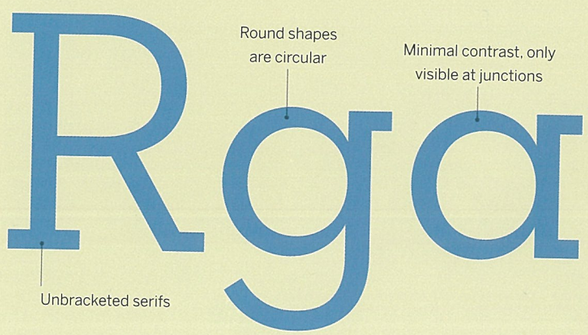
If one were to weigh the typical example of each classification, these bulky beasts would tip the scale furthest. Although they aren't simply Grotesque sans serifs with slab serifs slapped on, these typefaces reflect the proportions, structure and stroke contrast of their serifless counterparts. Ball terminals are common among Grotesque slabs, as are heavy bracketed serifs and closed apertures. The effect of these attention grabbers can be decorative and eye-catching, and is usually very bold.



Geometric Slab

Typeface shown: Neutraface Slab

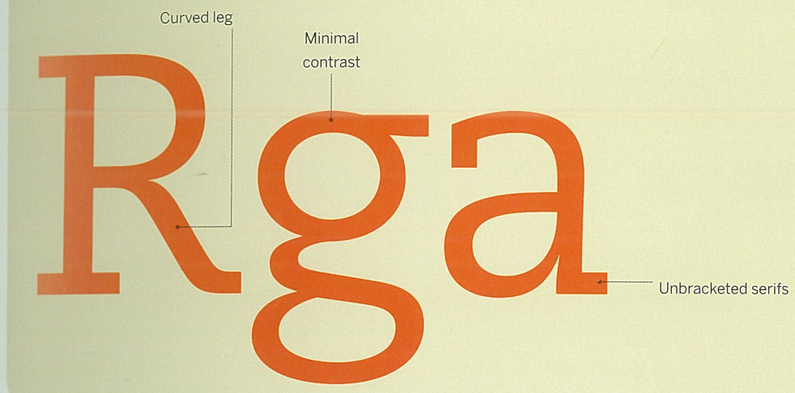
These slab serifs share the geometrically round or square shapes of their sans counterparts. Rectangular serifs are unbracketed and generally the same weight as the stems. In fact, all strokes are essentially of the same weight, lacking any perceptible contrast. The 'R' leg is a straight diagonal and 'g' is normally of the monocular form.



Humanist Slab

Typeface shown: PMN Caecilia

Put simply, you could take a Humanist sans serif and add unbracketed, rectangular serifs and get pretty close to a Humanist slab. These typefaces often have less stroke contrast than their sans counterparts, and the serifs are sometimes wedge shaped.



Script

Typeface shown: Tangier

Traditionally, a script typeface emulates handwriting, whether its letters are a graceful, connected cursive or the staccato scribbles of a daily shopping list. Besides formal and informal categories, scripts can also be sorted by the writing tool, such as pen or brush. Script fonts have become increasingly sophisticated in recent years thanks to technical developments like OpenType. Discretionary ligatures and contextual alternatives yield a more convincing emulation of real handwriting and offer a variety of decorative options.

Humanist Serif

24 Adobe Jenson

26 Cala

28 Bembo Book

30 FF Clifford

32 FF Scala

34 Lexicon

36 Minion

38 Garamond Premier

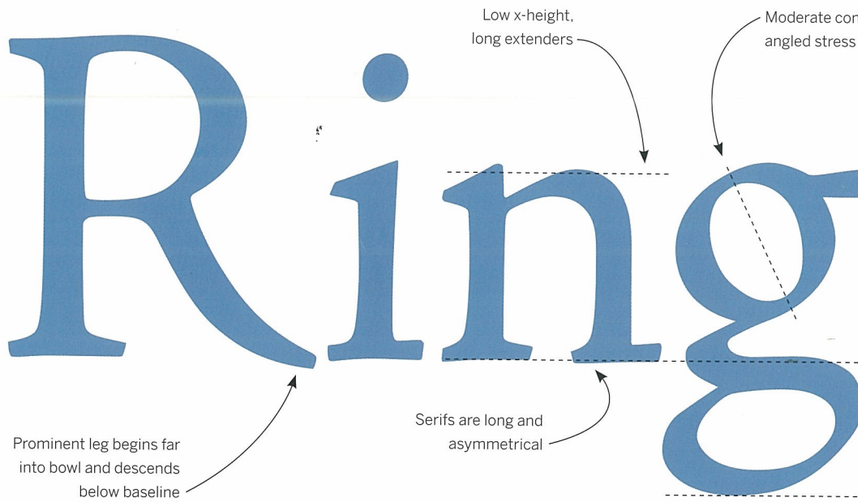
40 MVB Verdigris

xXxxxXxxx

Background typefaces are Cala and Garamond Premiere

Adobe Jenson

Designer: (Nicolas Jenson, Ludovico degli Arrighi) Robert Slimbach // **Foundry:** Adobe
Country of origin: (Italy) United States // **Release years:** (1470) 1995–2000 // **Classification:** Venetian Humanist Serif


Low x-height, long extenders
Moderate contrast, angled stress
Prominent leg begins far into bowl and descends below baseline
Serifs are long and asymmetrical

Adobe Jenson Caption

Adobe Jenson Display

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz ctfhfift 1234567890 369

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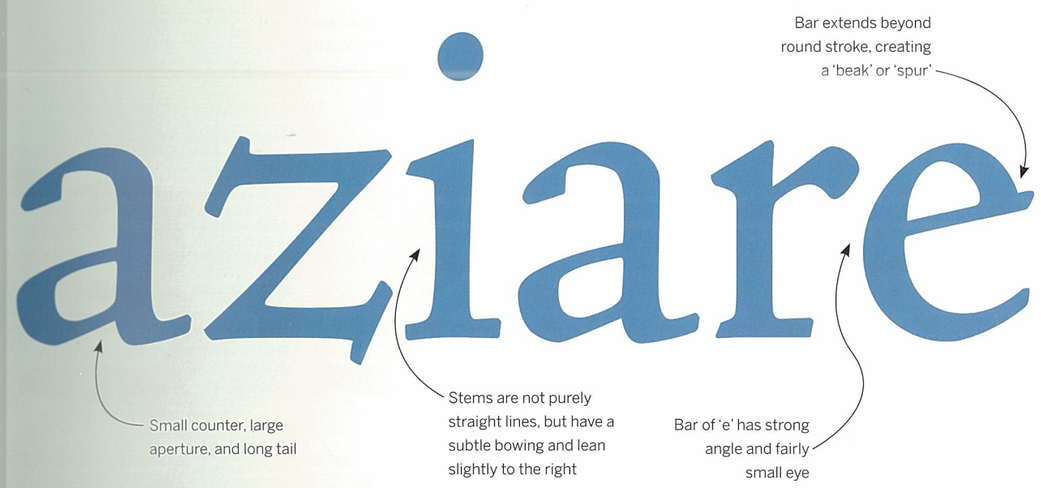
Adobe Jenson Regular


Bar extends beyond round stroke, creating a 'beak' or 'spur'
Small counter, large aperture, and long tail
Stems are not purely straight lines, but have a subtle bowing and lean slightly to the right
Bar of 'e' has strong angle and fairly small eye

Made in the Renaissance period, Nicolas Jenson's typeface is one of the very first with roman letter-shapes. It is called a Venetian serif, distinguished from other Humanist serifs by its obviously calligraphic construction and its angled, beaked 'e'. There are many interpretations of Jenson's work, but Adobe's is one of the most visually appealing and functional. It has four complete subfamilies (called 'optical sizes') to emulate the size-specific designs of the original metal type. Among these, Caption is dark with sturdy serifs and low stroke contrast for small text, whereas Display is light and delicate, with fine details and long extenders for lovely titles. ***Good for:*** Any text, short or long, that calls for a rich, flowery perfume.

Compare to:

Rae

Cala

Rae

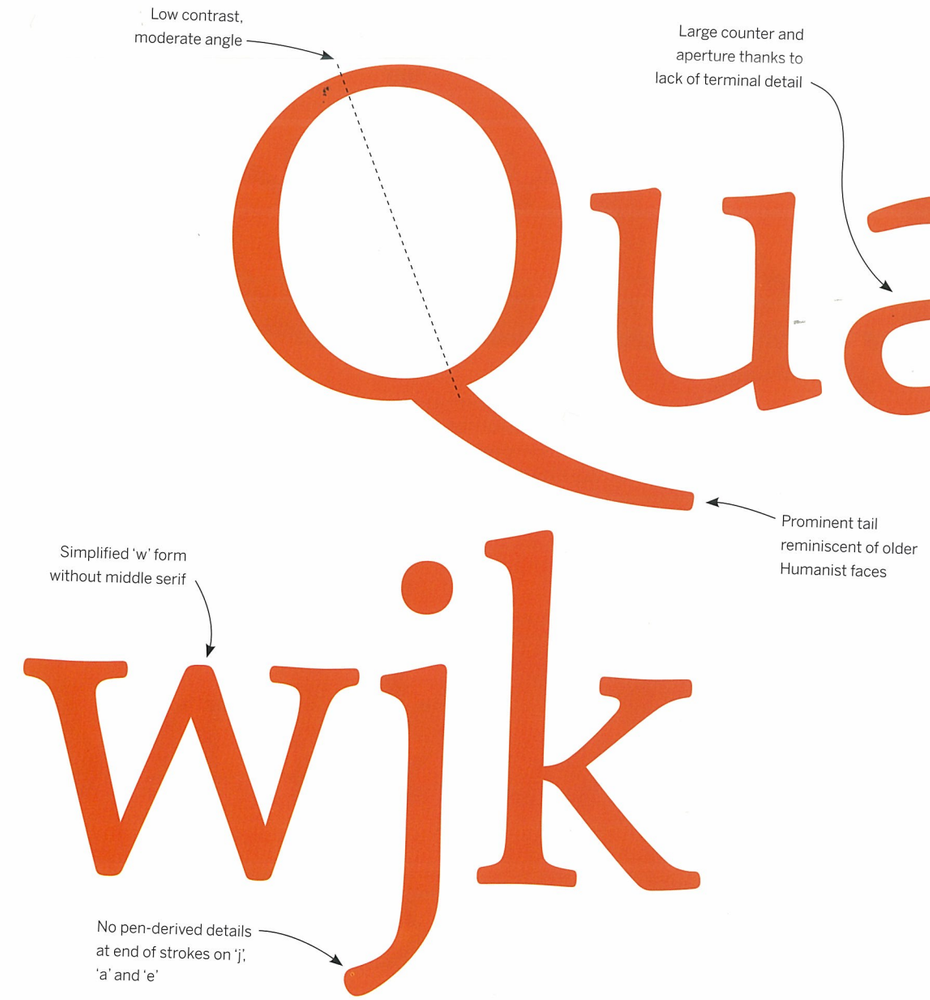
Centaur

Rae

Bembo Book

Cala

Designer: Dieter Hofrichter // **Foundry:** Hoftype // **Country of origin:** Germany // **Release year:** 2011
Classification: Venetian Humanist Serif


Low contrast, moderate angle
Large counter and aperture thanks to lack of terminal detail
Quagliare
Prominent tail reminiscent of older Humanist faces
Simplified 'w' form without middle serif
wjk
No pen-derived details at end of strokes on 'j', 'a' and 'e'

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abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz ctspst 1234567890

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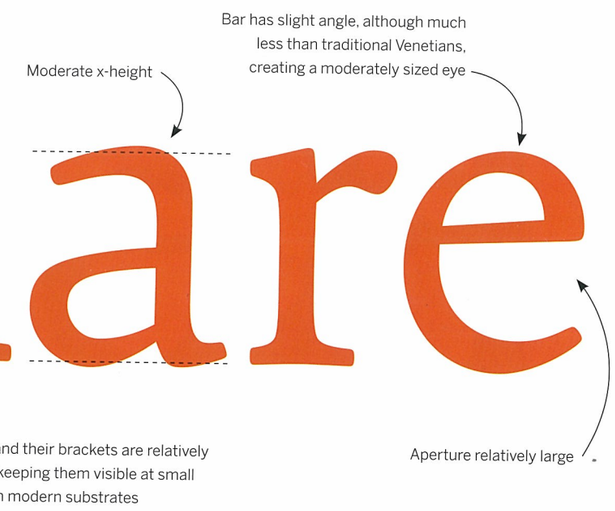
Cala Regular


Moderate x-height
Bar has slight angle, although much less than traditional Venetians, creating a moderately sized eye
Quagliare
Serifs and their brackets are relatively heavy, keeping them visible at small sizes on modern substrates
Aperture relatively large

Cala is a contemporary Venetian. Dieter Hofrichter retained the unique characteristics of the Renaissance serif – the tilting 'e', the calligraphic strokes with soft ends and blunt serifs – but stripped out the more decorative details. Its proportions are more modern as well, with a slightly larger x-height and cap widths that are more in tune with today's readers (compare to Jenson's 'E', 'H' and 'Z'). While **Adobe Jenson** calls direct attention to its antique roots, Cala just nods to them.
Good for: Subject matter with one foot in the past and one in the present. Websites with a historical focus.

Compare to:

Qaejkw

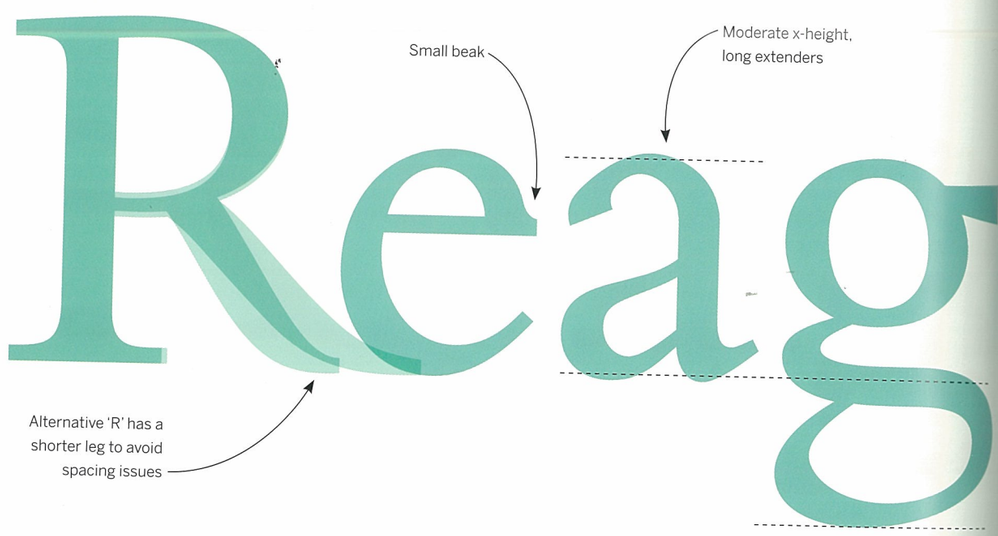
Adobe Jenson

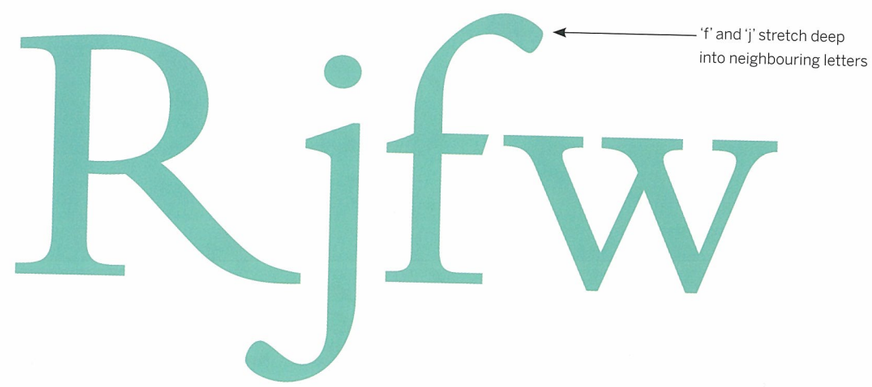
Qaejkw

Bembo Book

Bembo Book

Designer: (Aldus Manutius, Francesco Griffo) Monotype staff // **Foundry:** Monotype
Country of origin: (Italy) United Kingdom // **Release year:** (1495) 2005 // **Classification:** Venetian Humanist Serif





ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz ctst 1234567890 163

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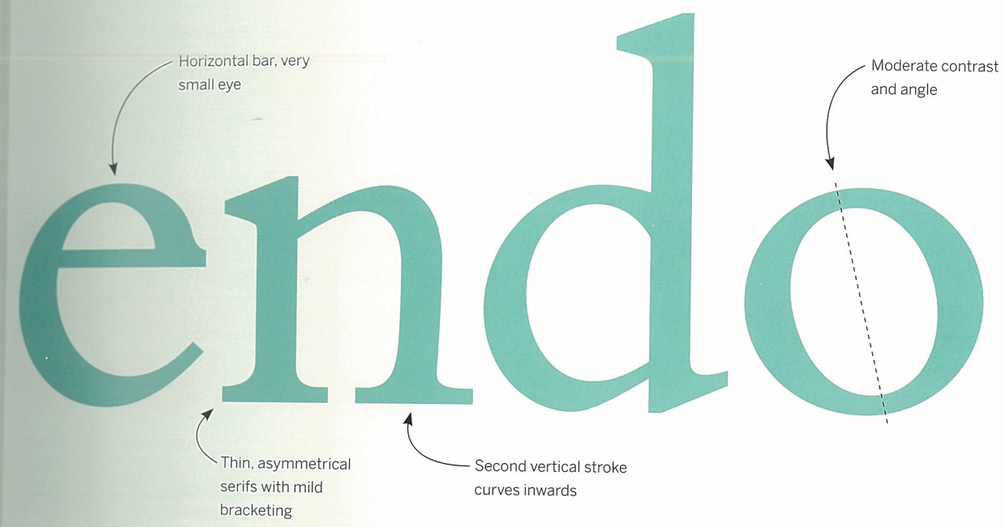
Bembo Book MT Regular


Horizontal bar, very small eye
Moderate contrast and angle
Thin, asymmetrical serifs with mild bracketing
Second vertical stroke curves inwards

Bembo is the most popular of the Renaissance serifs, frequently called upon for setting elegant book text ever since it was cut by Monotype in 1929. The digital version, however, is a feeble shadow of the metal type. Like so many of the revivals that appeared in desktop publishing's early years, Bembo is far too delicate for modern printing, and certainly for the screen. Monotype went back to the digital drawing board for **Bembo Book**, which retains the proper weight of the original. It also offers a very welcome alternative 'R' with a leg that doesn't stretch so far, thereby not creating gaps or tripping its neighbours. ***Good for:*** Long text on good, soft paper. Historical novels.

Compare to:

Raejfw

Bembo

Raejfw

Centaur

FF Clifford

Designer: Akira Kobayashi // **Foundry:** FontFont // **Country of origin:** Japan, Germany // **Release year:** 1999
Classification: Humanist Serif, Dutch/English Transitional Serif

FF Clifford Six Roman

FF Clifford Eighteen Roman

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz ctfjftst 1234567890

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FF Clifford Nine Roman

Award-winning Japanese designer Akira Kobayashi was disappointed with the weak digital versions of classic metal typefaces, so he sought to make his own. Although his inspiration was an 18th-century typeface by Scottish typefounder Alexander Wilson, **FF Clifford** is entirely his own design. Its dark colour, bulbous terminals and large lowercase make for a very pleasurable reading experience. There is also a distinctive hand-drawn quality to these letters – stems are slightly bowed, serifs are cupped and there isn't a perfectly straight line to be found. FF Clifford comes in optical sizes (6, 9 and 18) with romans and italics, but no bold, emphasising the intended purpose. ***Good for:*** Text about the natural world or stuff made by hand.

Compare to:

Ragesify

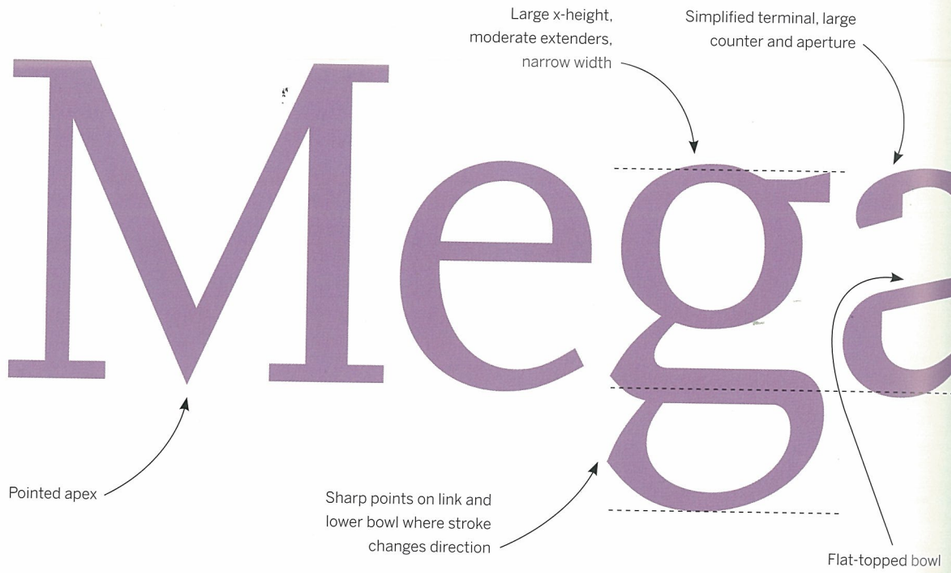
Original Baskerville 10

Ragesify

MVB Verdigris Text

FF Scala

Designer: Martin Majoor // **Foundry:** FontFont // **Country of origin:** The Netherlands // **Release year:** 1990
Classification: Dutch/French Humanist Serif


Large x-height, moderate extenders, narrow width
Simplified terminal, large counter and aperture
Megabytes
Pointed apex
Sharp points on link and lower bowl where stroke changes direction
Flat-topped bowl

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890
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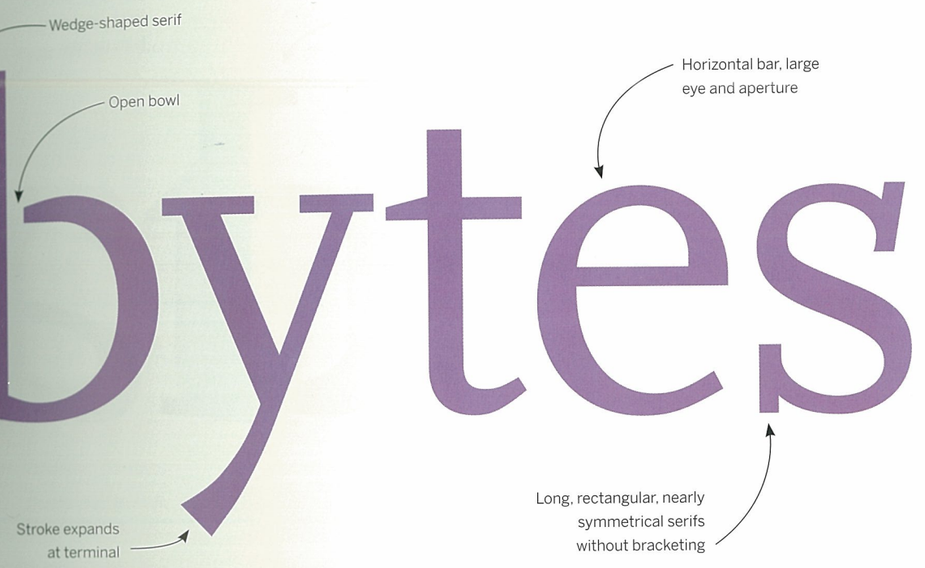
FF Scala Regular



While serif types like **FF Clifford** are warm and curvaceous, **FF Scala** is hard-edged and constructed. Released in 1990, but designed several years earlier, FF Scala is one of the first typefaces in this style to be designed specifically on and for the computer. Its shapes reflect that fact, with straight lines, rectangular, unbracketed serifs, and sharp points. These aspects are less stark at Text sizes, but the overall effect is a very fresh, modern feeling despite a calligraphic structure that is essentially hundreds of years old. The simplified contours make FF Scala an excellent screen typeface. It truly is an old-style serif for the digital world. ***Good for:*** Modern art exhibition catalogues and websites.

Compare to:

Mabges

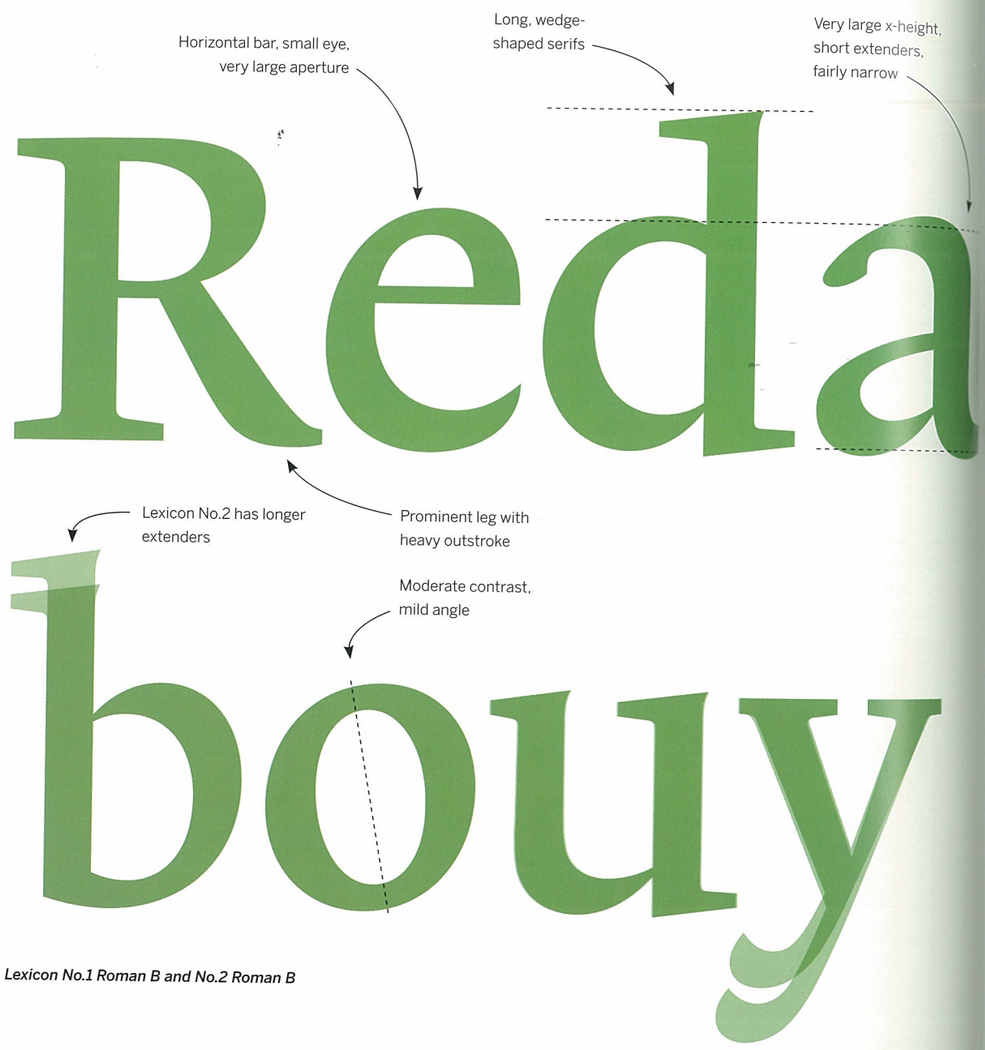
Garamond Premier

Mabges

FF Clifford

Lexicon

Designer: Bram de Does // **Foundry:** Enschedé // **Country of origin:** The Netherlands // **Release year:** 1992
Classification: Dutch Humanist/Transitional Serif


Horizontal bar, small eye, very large aperture
Long, wedge-shaped serifs
Very large x-height, short extenders, fairly narrow
Redacting
Lexicon No.2 has longer extenders
Prominent leg with heavy outstroke
Moderate contrast, mild angle
bouy

Lexicon No.1 Roman B and No.2 Roman B

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890
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Lexicon No.1 Roman B

Fairly dark colour overall
Arched strokes begin very light at stems
Redacting
Pointed terminals on curved strokes
Wide 'g' in contrast to narrow body overall, allowing for larger counters despite short descender and darker colour

Lexicon was created specifically for dictionaries. As such, it is optimised for maximum readability in a minimum of space. It achieves this using methods that have become identified with Dutch type design: a calligraphic yet efficient construction, narrow width and very light junctions where curved strokes meet stems, allowing ink to spread without affecting legibility. Despite these functional aspects, Lexicon has a graceful flow that is quite appealing at any size: No.1 has very short extenders, maximising spatial economy; No.2 offers longer extenders when space isn't at such a premium. The two variants share the same width, so you can switch without text reflow. ***Good for:*** Dictionaries, Bibles, timetables, newspapers and other dense text.

Compare to:

AREacegy

Garamond Premier

AREacegy

Le Monde Journal

Minion

Designer: Robert Slimbach // **Foundry:** Adobe // **Country of origin:** United States // **Release year:** 1990
Classification: Venetian/French Humanist Serif

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz ctspst 1234567890 163

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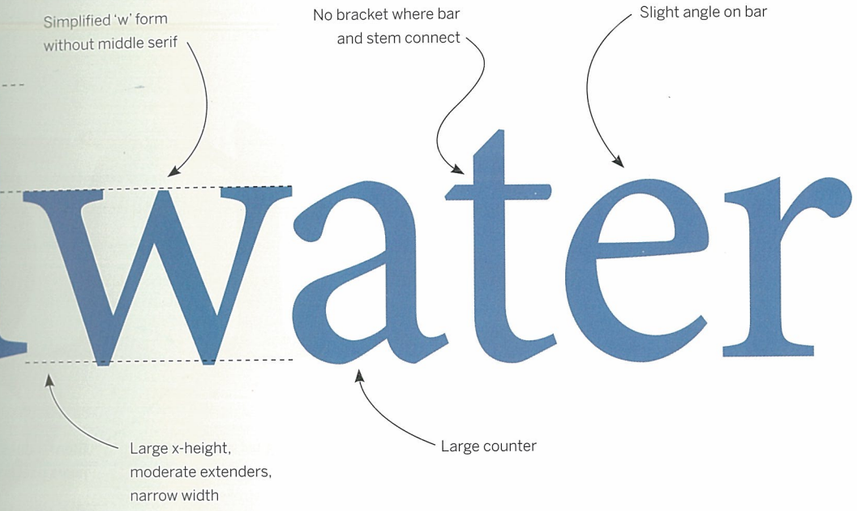
Minion Regular


Simplified 'w' form without middle serif
No bracket where bar and stem connect
Slight angle on bar
Large x-height, moderate extenders, narrow width
Large counter

Minion is perhaps the most vanilla of serif typefaces. This isn't necessarily a negative – often the goal of a text face is to make as little aesthetic impact as possible. Minion does just that. It can be your everyday hardworking, utilitarian serif. In many ways, Minion is a modernised Garamond or Bembo: the x-height is larger, counters and apertures are more open, serifs are chunkier and superfluous details are reduced. These effects are maximised in the Caption version, meant for small sizes. For large type, Display is more like its historical models: delicate, with lengthened extenders and sharper serifs. ***Good for:*** When you really don't want anyone to notice the type.

Compare to:

agsejw

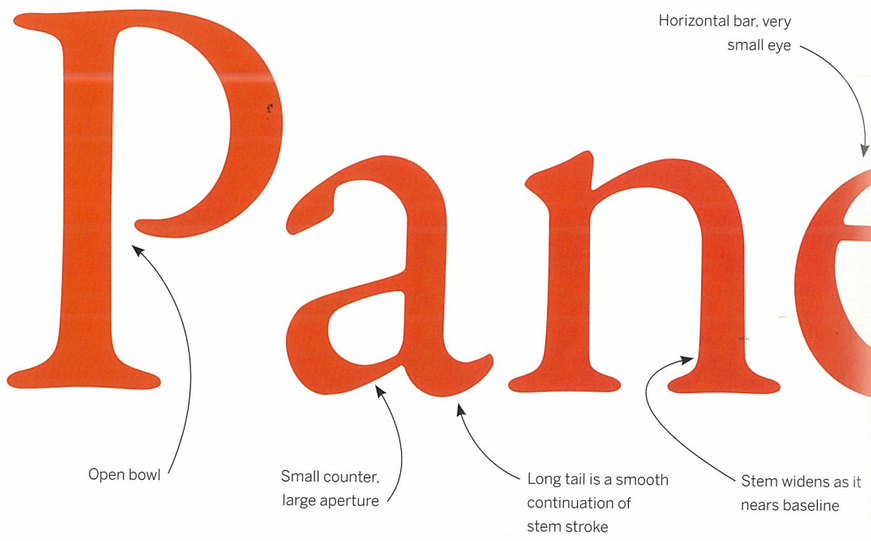
Garamond Premier

agsejw

Adobe Caslon

Garamond Premier

Designer: (Claude Garamond, Robert Granjon) Robert Slimbach // **Foundry:** Adobe
Country of origin: (France) United States // **Release year:** 2005 // **Classification:** French Humanist Serif


Horizontal bar, very small eye
Open bowl
Small counter, large aperture
Long tail is a smooth continuation of stem stroke
Stem widens as it nears baseline

Garamond Premier Caption

Garamond Premier Display

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz ctftſpst 1234567890 163

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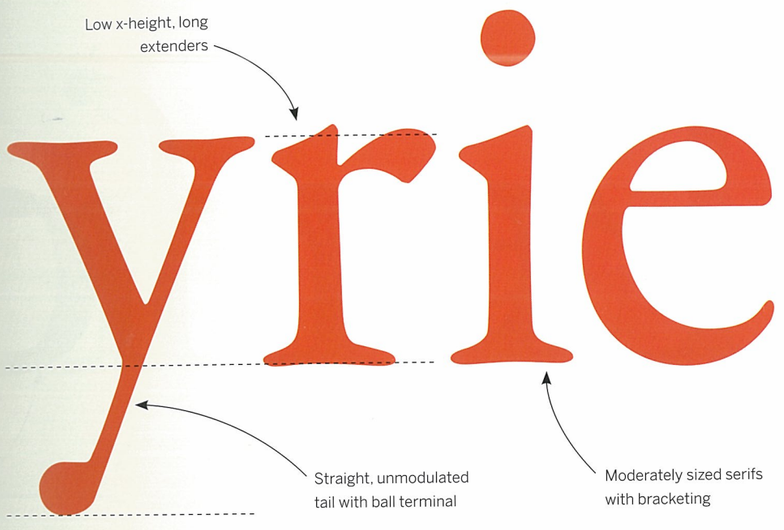
Garamond Premier Regular



Refined and readable, Garamond is probably the most popular of the Humanist serifs. Longtime users of Adobe apps will be familiar with Robert Slimbach's first crack at this classic typeface, Adobe Garamond, but **Garamond Premier** is a major improvement. The most important difference is that Slimbach drew separate subfamilies (optical sizes) corresponding to different sizes of metal type. This lets Garamond's delicate beauty stretch out in headlines but not break apart when small. Despite a subdued character in Caption and Regular (Text) sizes, Garamond is never dull by any means. Use with care: it has a formal personality that might not fit more casual topics. ***Good for:*** Infusing a document with importance, reverence or poetry.

Compare to:

GfgateP

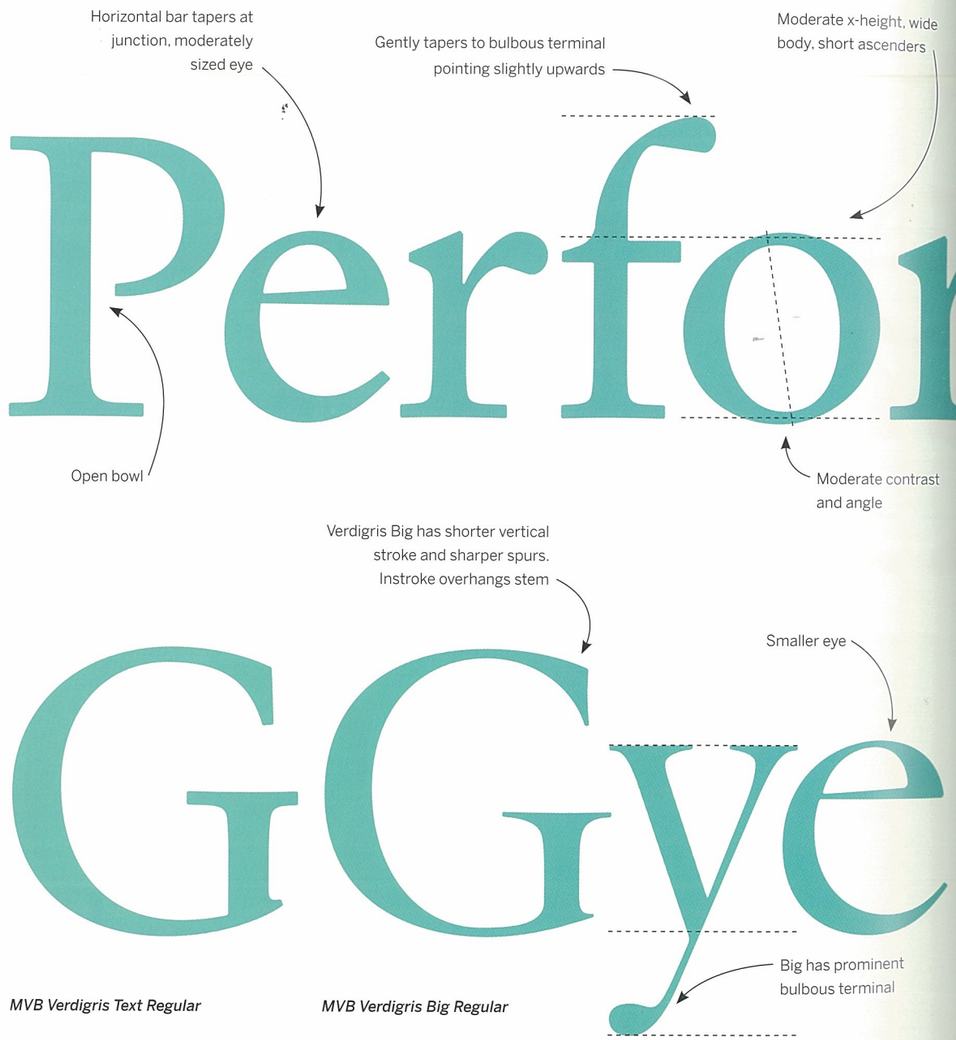
FF Yoga

GfgateP

Adobe Caslon

MVB Verdigris

Designer: Mark van Bronkhorst // **Foundry:** MVB Fonts // **Country of origin:** United States
Release years: 2003, 2010, 2012 // **Classification:** French Humanist Serif


Horizontal bar tapers at junction, moderately sized eye
Gently tapers to bulbous terminal pointing slightly upwards
Moderate x-height, wide body, short ascenders
Perforating
Open bowl
Moderate contrast and angle
Verdigris Big has shorter vertical stroke and sharper spurs. Instroke overhangs stem
Smaller eye
GGye
Big has prominent bulbous terminal

MVB Verdigris Text Regular

MVB Verdigris Big Regular

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890

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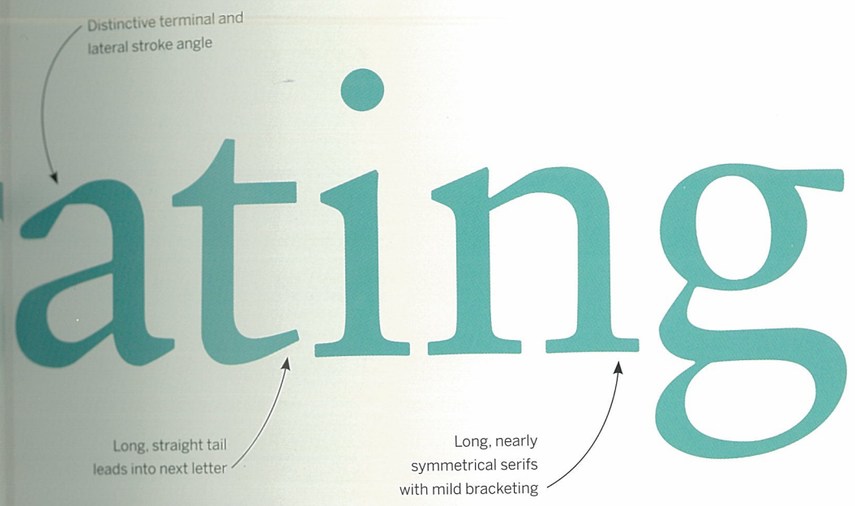
MVB Verdigris Text Regular


Distinctive terminal and lateral stroke angle
Perforating
Long, straight tail leads into next letter
Long, nearly symmetrical serifs with mild bracketing

When type was metal or wood, every font was a specific size. The scalability of photo and digital type was a productivity boon, but much was lost in the process. Modern interpretations of classic metal typefaces were based on a single size and they often replicated the metal face itself, not the richness and weight of the type's impression on paper. The result was anaemic and fragile. **MVB Verdigris** is a direct response to these shortcomings. A distinguished Humanist serif inspired by 16th-century punchcutters, MVB Verdigris comes in a sturdy, functional version for text and a handsome, high-contrast version for titling. Typographic niceties abound, including a set of useful 'mid caps', sized between full and small caps. This is truly a text serif for the digital age.

Compare to:

GfgateP

Garamond Premier

GfgateP

Galliard

Transitional Serif

44 Adobe Caslon

46 Baskerville Original

48 Mrs Eaves

50 Plantin

52 Arnhem

54 Times New Roman

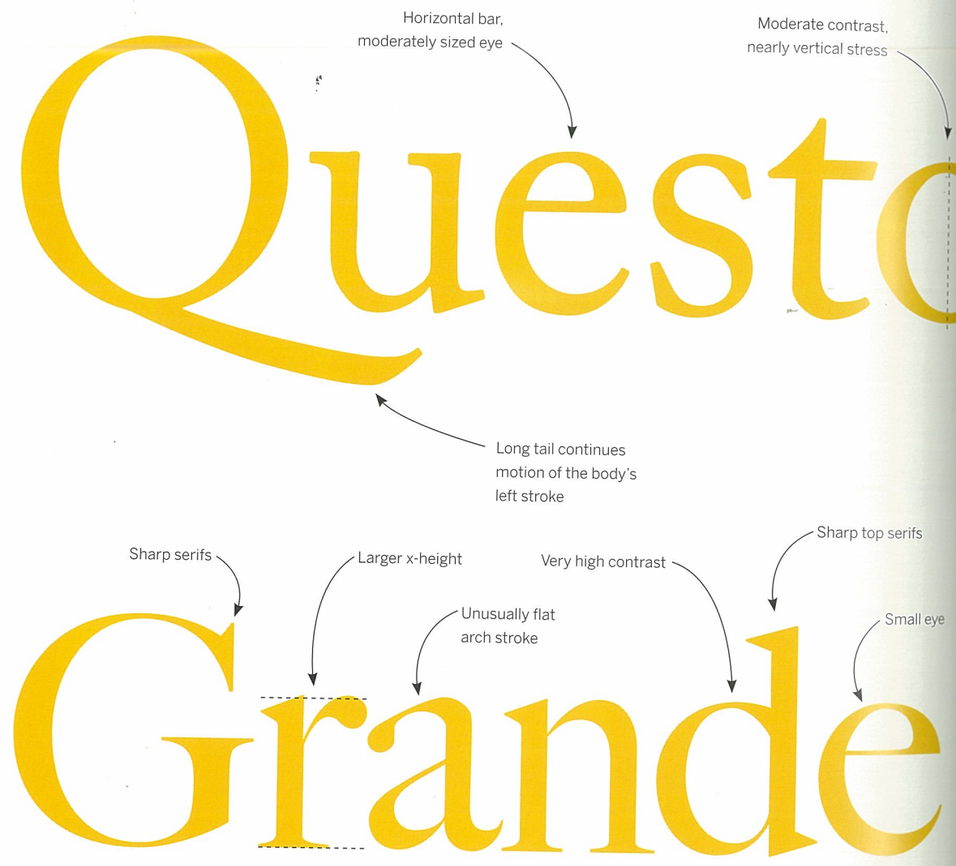
56 Le Monde Journal

XXxXXXX

Background typefaces are Le Monde Journal and Baskerville Original

Adobe Caslon

Designer: (William Caslon) Carol Twombly // **Foundry:** Adobe // **Country of origin:** (United Kingdom) United States
Release years: (1725) 1990–1992 // **Classification:** Transitional Serif



Big Caslon

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz ctst 1234567890 163

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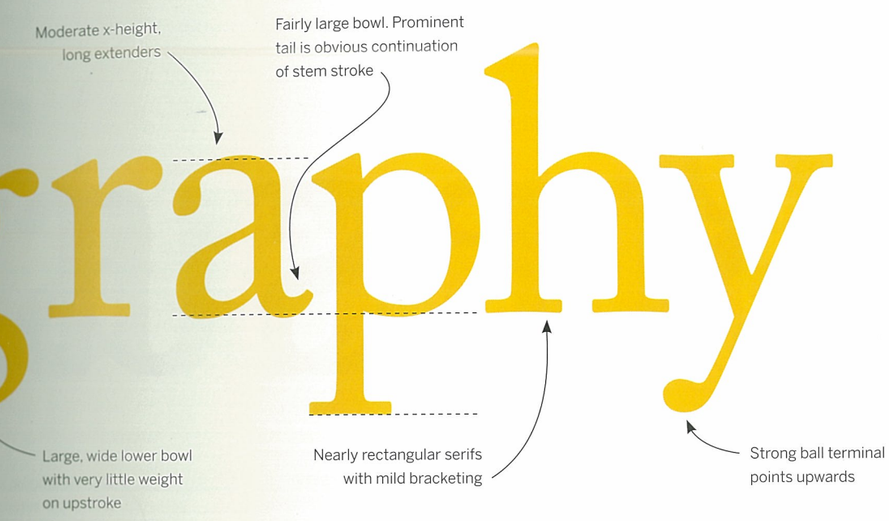
Adobe Caslon Regular


Moderate x-height, long extenders
Fairly large bowl. Prominent tail is obvious continuation of stem stroke
Large, wide lower bowl with very little weight on upstroke
Nearly rectangular serifs with mild bracketing
Strong ball terminal points upwards
graphy

Ever since its release at the height of the desktop publishing (DTP) age, **Adobe Caslon** has been the 'default' serif for many designers. In fact, the original metal type was also a printer's standby for many years, as evidenced by the expression 'when in doubt, use Caslon'. The typeface is now so familiar, it simply *feels right* most of the time – though it could seem slightly antique for some settings. Caslon is one of the first typefaces to show hints of a transition from pen-based shapes to constructed letterforms. Adobe's version emphasises those aspects for a fairly even texture overall, especially in the italic where the slant is very consistent. (Those wanting a darker, hand-cut option might like Font Bureau's Williams Caslon.)

Compare to:

Qaeryg

MVB Verdigris

Qaeryg

Garamond Premier

Baskerville Original

Designer: (John Baskerville) František Štorm // **Foundry:** Storm // **Country of origin:** (United Kingdom) Czech Republic
Release year: (1750s–1760s) 2006 // **Classification:** Transitional Serif

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Baskerville 10 Regular

Horizontal bar, small eye
Very flat upper stroke and large aperture
Fairly large x-height
Prominent dog-ish ear
Resurfacing
Long, straight leg is heaviest at the baseline
Modest serifs with asymmetrical bracketing
Open bowl
Higher contrast
120 has smaller x-height and longer extenders
Moderate contrast, vertical stress
QhQhg
Decorative tail with stroke in two directions

Baskerville 10 Regular *Baskerville 120 Regular*

Baskerville is the quintessential Transitional serif, positioned neatly between the dynamic calligraphy of the Humanists and the static construction of the Rationalists. Like many of the old-style serifs, there are a few digital versions, but all fall woefully short of the original design by attempting to create a one-size-fits-all typeface from the variety of metal sizes. František Štorm's family is not only more functional, with large and small optical sizes, but also revives Baskerville's handsome, vigorous spirit. These rich curves feel crafted by hand, not computer. Dashing – maybe even exuberant – Baskerville has been known to steal the show, so be sure the content fits it (or doesn't mind playing second fiddle). ***Good for:*** Debonair swagger.

Compare to:

Rgeawfnc

Mrs Eaves

Rgeawfnc

Baskerville (BT)

Mrs Eaves

Designer: Zuzana Licko // **Foundry:** Emigre // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 1996 // **Classification:** Transitional Serif

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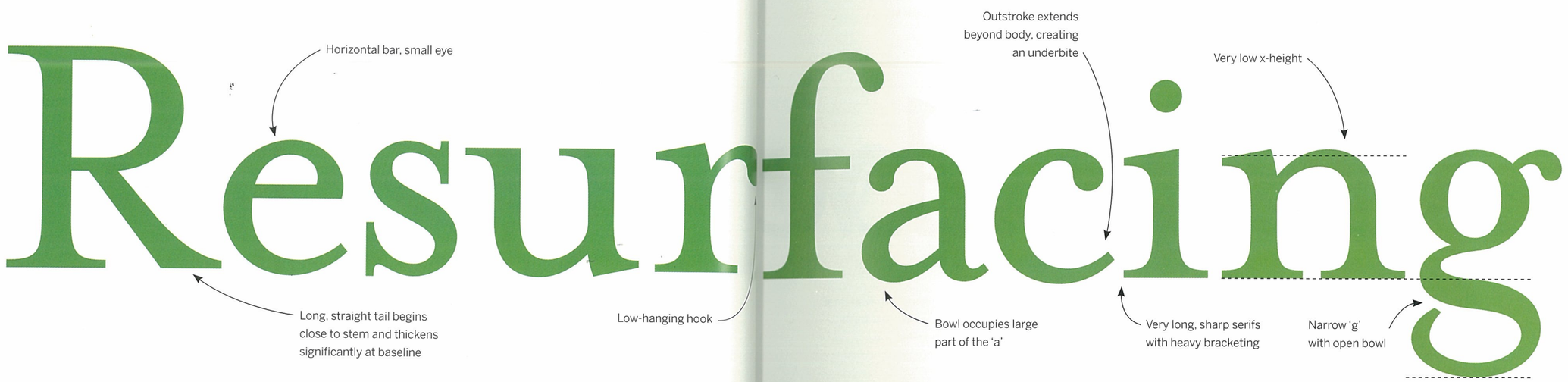
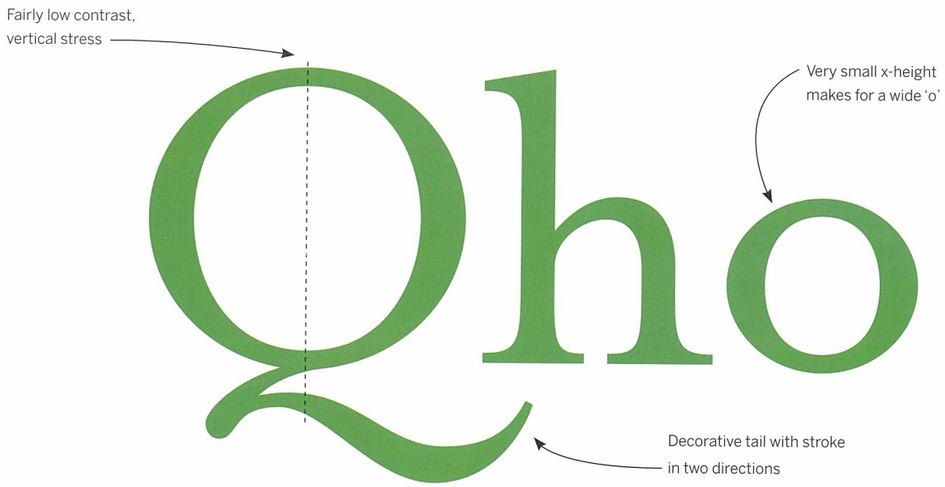
Mrs Eaves Roman


Horizontal bar, small eye
Outstroke extends beyond body, creating an underbite
Very low x-height
Resurfacing
Long, straight tail begins close to stem and thickens significantly at baseline
Low-hanging hook
Bowl occupies large part of the 'a'
Very long, sharp serifs with heavy bracketing
Narrow 'g' with open bowl


Fairly low contrast, vertical stress
Very small x-height makes for a wide 'o'
Qho
Decorative tail with stroke in two directions

Zuzana Licko's reimagining of Baskerville is named after the housekeeper of John Baskerville who later became his wife. The typeface has a very low x-height and prominent serifs, which makes the lowercase appear quite squat, with a horizontal emphasis. There is also much less sparkling contrast than Baskerville. But otherwise **Mrs Eaves** is quite dainty and ladylike. The long ascenders and sharp details make it less of a daily workhorse and more of the fine china used only when hosting important guests. The place setting gets even more fancy when one incorporates the frilly lace of Mrs Eaves's ligatures, many of which go beyond the functional (a solution for colliding letters) to the flamboyant (pure decoration). ***Good for:*** Special occasions.

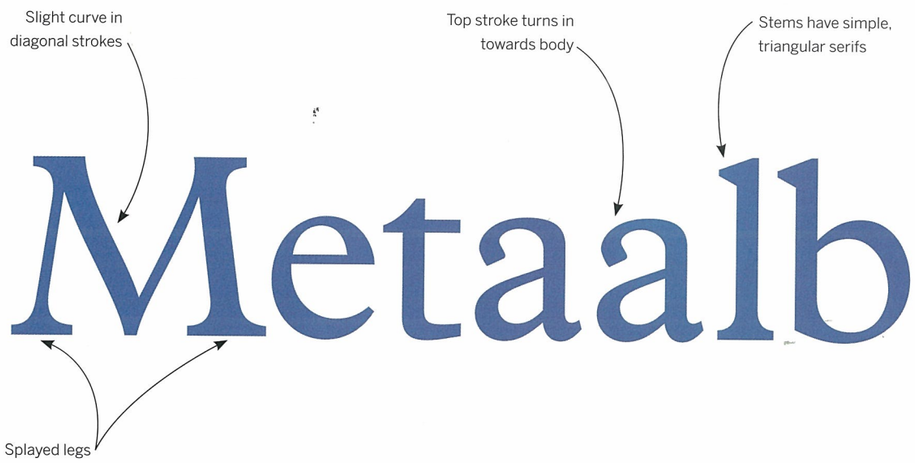
Compare to:

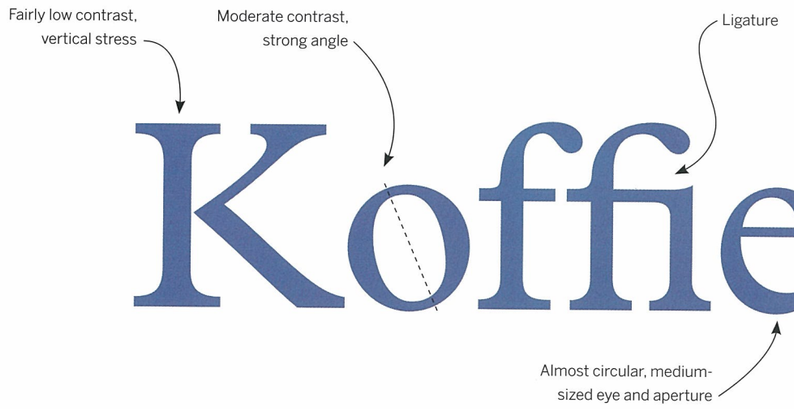
Rgeawfnc

Baskerville 10

Plantin

Designer: (Robert Granjon) Frank Hinman Pierpont // **Foundry:** Monotype // **Country of origin:** (The Netherlands) United Kingdom // **Release year:** (1700) 1914 // **Classification:** Transitional Serif





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Plantin Regular

Diagonal strokes do not meet stem
Moderate x-height, wide body, short extenders
Metaalbewerking
Serifs have moderate length with heavy bracketing
Leg is trimmed vertically at end, reducing its length
Wide body and short descender makes for squat lower bowl

There are many vestiges of the Humanist pen in **Plantin**, particularly in the terminal of its quaint 'a' or the consistently triangular serifs atop stems. But there are elements that don't fit those early types: the stunted extenders, the chunky serifs and the large counters of the 'a' and 'e'. These contradictions come from a blend of two eras: 16th-century samples from Granjon reshaped to meet the early 20th-century needs of a darker, sturdier face for modern paper. The shortened proportions made Plantin a good newspaper typeface, and a condensed version, News Plantin, was developed for the *Observer* in London. It was also a model for **Times New Roman**. ***Good for:*** Serious, expedient content, delivered with authority and a bit of charm.

Compare to:

GaetoPg

Times New Roman

GaetoPg

Arnhem

Arnhem

Designer: Fred Smeijers // **Foundry:** OurType // **Country of origin:** The Netherlands
Release year: 2001 // **Classification:** Transitional Serif

Darker than most book weights, allows high contrast with hairlines that aren't too light

Fairly high contrast, vertical stress

Substantial, pointed hook stroke

Moderately sized bowl accommodates ball terminal

Large dot sits close to body and slightly off-centre

Large x-height, moderate extenders

Tapering bar

Koortsachtige

Diagonal strokes don't meet stem, avoids unwanted ink gain

Thin wedge serifs

Lower bowl has angled stress, giving it a dynamic appearance

Fairly narrow 'g'

Large bowl, low waist

RANDJE

Descending 'J' with ball terminal

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Arnhem Normal

Borrowing what Dutch type design has learned from centuries of letterform experimentation, Fred Smeijers has achieved a perfect balance of function and beauty. In fact, it's a great example of how beauty comes from function. **Arnhem** was created for a newspaper, but unlike most news faces it is lively and attractive. This is due mostly to its higher contrast (in all the right places) and its ball terminals and pointed serifs. These 'pretty' details all have a purpose: compensating for ink spread on newsprint and giving text a substantial, but not clunky, weight. Arnhem also sports an unusually large x-height for a serif, which enables not only dense text, but also a more harmonious fit with most sans serifs.
Good for: Magazines. Forward-thinking newspapers.

Compare to:

agecrk

Lexicon

agecrk

Times New Roman

Times New Roman

Designer: Stanley Morison, Victor Lardent or (disputed) Starling Burgess // **Foundry:** Monotype
Country of origin: United Kingdom // **Release year:** 1932 // **Classification:** Transitional Serif

High contrast, strong angle, especially on 'e'
Fairly large x-height and extenders, narrow body
Medium-sized counter, small aperture (nearly closes on itself)
Regulations
Straight leg extends beyond bowl
Very small aperture
Very wide caps
FG

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Times New Roman

Times New Roman is one of today's most familiar and often-used typefaces. It owes its ubiquity to being standard issue in digital publishing systems for many years, but the design's original intended destination was newsprint, not laser paper. Created for *The Times* of London, it is derived from Plantin, but is decidedly more modern, with high contrast and thin serifs. Those details, and peculiarities like its relatively wide and heavy caps, make it less suitable for everyday typesetting – which is ironic, given its status. On modern substrates, Times is actually better in Display settings than Text, where Times Ten fares better. Fresher alternatives are Starling (Font Bureau, 2009) and **Le Monde Journal**. ***Good for:*** A non-designed, conventional office-document look.

Compare to:

Raego

Le Monde Journal

Raego

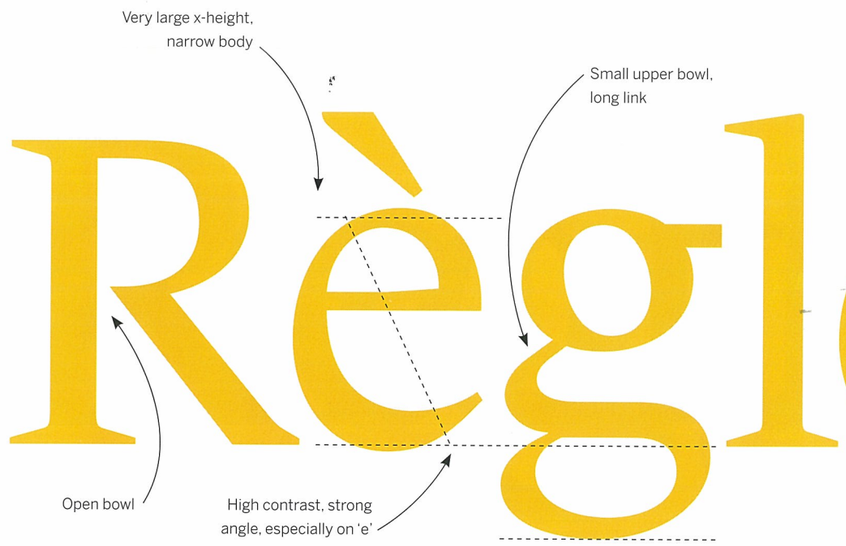
Plantin

Raego

Arhnem

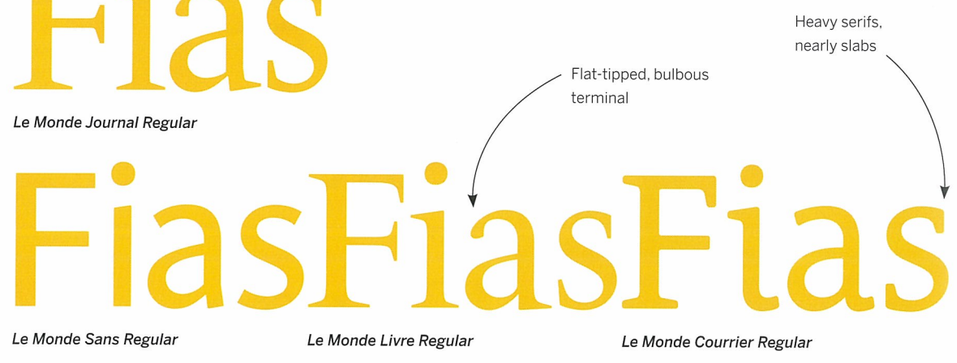
Le Monde Journal

Designer: Jean François Porchez // **Foundry:** Porchez Typofonderie // **Country of origin:** France
Release years: 1997–2008 // **Classification:** Transitional Serif


Very large x-height, narrow body
Small upper bowl, long link
Open bowl
High contrast, strong angle, especially on 'e'
Règlement

Fias

Le Monde Journal Regular



Le Monde Sans Regular *Le Monde Livre Regular* *Le Monde Courrier Regular*

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Le Monde Journal Regular

Jean François Porchez's commission for the *Le Monde* newspaper is a perfect example of learning from and improving on historical type. **Le Monde Journal** is a **Times New Roman** for the 21st century. Counters and apertures are much more open ('illuminated from the inside', as Porchez puts it); minimal wedges replace curved brackets; and the x-height is even larger. The overall effect is the colour and flavour of a typeface readers are used to seeing in newsprint, but with better readability and a more contemporary feel. There are a broad range of extra weights designed to respond to subtle variations in substrates, plus a superfamily of companions: Sans, Courier (slab) and Livre (larger text and titling). ***Good for:*** Small or space-saving text. Publication design.

Compare to:

Raego

Times New Roman

Raego

Arnhem

Rational Serif

60 Bauer Bodoni

62 ITC Bodoni

64 H&FJ Didot

66 Filosofia

68 Farnham

70 New Century Schoolbook

72 Miller

74 Eames Century Modern

76 Ingeborg

78 Melior

XXXxXXXXXX

Background typefaces are Miller and H&FJ Didot

Bauer Bodoni

Designer: (Giambattista Bodoni) Heinrich Jost // **Foundry:** Bauer Type Foundry, Neufville, Bitstream
Country of origin: (Italy) Germany // **Release year:** (1790) 1926 // **Classification:** Didone Serif

Large eye, small aperture
Moderate x-height, long extenders, slightly narrow body
Ball terminals of varying size on 'a' and 'g'
Regolativo
Leg extends laterally from stem, matching width of bowl. Turns up slightly at end
Very thin serifs without brackets
Some thin strokes have serifs with slight bracketing
Sfn

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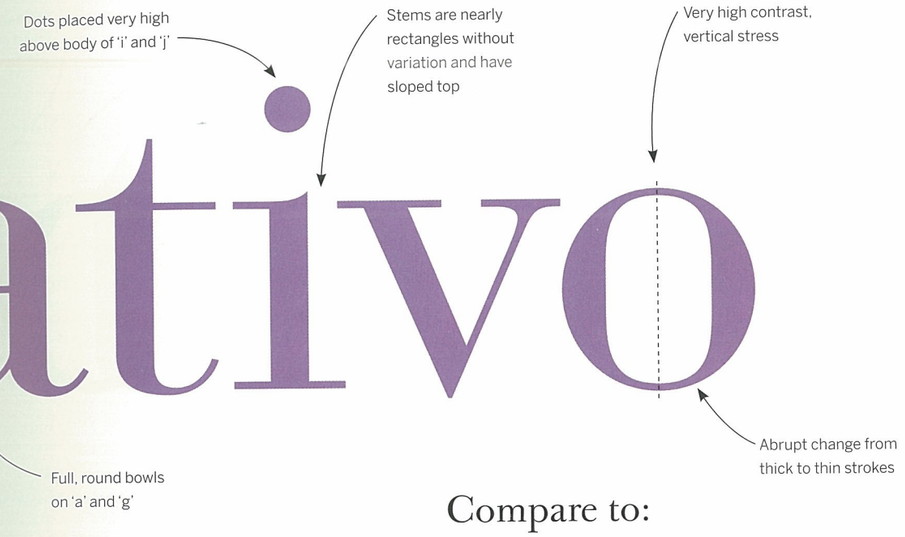
Bauer Bodoni Roman


Dots placed very high above body of 'i' and 'j'
Stems are nearly rectangles without variation and have sloped top
Very high contrast, vertical stress
Regolativo
Full, round bowls on 'a' and 'g'
Abrupt change from thick to thin strokes

Bodoni is the most typical Rational serif, and **Bauer Bodoni** is perhaps the most typical Bodoni. It has everything we associate with the style: heavy strokes that abruptly reduce to hairlines, long, thin serifs, and distinct ball terminals on the 'a', 'c', 'f', 'g', 'r' and 'y.' It appears constructed, rather than written, with only a few letters – such as the leg of the 'R' or the tail of the 'Q' – directly referencing the stroke of a pen. This font's use is limited, though. It will fall apart if set small or reversed (light type on dark backgrounds). So, this Bodoni is best used simply, letting its delicate details play their part on a large, uncomplicated stage.
Good for: Elegant headlines. Fancy packaging.

Compare to:

Rfaegso
Bodoni ITC Six

Rfaegso
HTF Didot M96

Rfaegso
Filosofia

ITC Bodoni

Designer: (Giambattista Bodoni) Janice Fishman, Holly Goldsmith, Jim Parkinson, Sumner Stone // **Foundry:** ITC
Country of origin: (Italy) United States // **Release year:** (1790) 1994 // **Classification:** Didone Serif

Large eye, moderate aperture
Moderate x-height and descenders. X-height and width decrease as 'optical sizes' increase
Stems are slightly irregular, feel 'hand modelled'
Regolativo
Leg extends laterally from stem, matching width of bowl. Ends in ball terminal
Relatively gradual change from thick to thin strokes
Moderate contrast in Six. Very high contrast and vertical stress in Seventytwo
SfnSfn
ITC Bodoni Six Book
Thick, slightly irregular serifs
ITC Bodoni Seventytwo Book
Very thin serifs

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ITC Bodoni Twelve Book
Ball terminals of 'g' and 'a' are similar size
High contrast, very slight angle
Regolativo
Slightly cupped serifs of moderate weight

Of the many attempts to capture Giambattista Bodoni's classic type, **ITC Bodoni** is the most accurate and versatile. What sets it apart from other digitisations is the close reproduction of three different sizes of metal type. A team of four type designers produced a true revival, reflecting the subtleties of Bodoni – from the rough, hand-cut contours in the Six size (for small text) to the exuberant italic swashes in Seventytwo (for display). With its reduced contrast in the text weights, **ITC Bodoni** is a Bodoni you can set small without fear of disappearing hairlines. It has a warmth and hand-crafted feeling that is absent from most Bodoni interpretations, and is thus a very different face overall. ***Good for:*** When other Didones would dissolve.

Compare to:

Rfaegso

Bauer Bodoni

Rfaegso

HTF Didot M96

Rfaegso

Filosofia

H&FJ Didot

Designer: (Firmin Didot) Jonathan Hoefler // **Foundry:** Hoefler & Frere-Jones // **Country of origin:** (France) United States
Release year: (1784–1811) 1991 as HTF Didot // **Classification:** Didone Serif

Scalloped terminal
Very high contrast, vertical stress
Retorquais
Leg extends laterally from stem past width of bowl, turns up slightly at end
Large eye, moderate aperture
Prominent teardrop terminals on 'r' and 'f'
Long ear with small ball terminal
Sfg
Very large lower bowl

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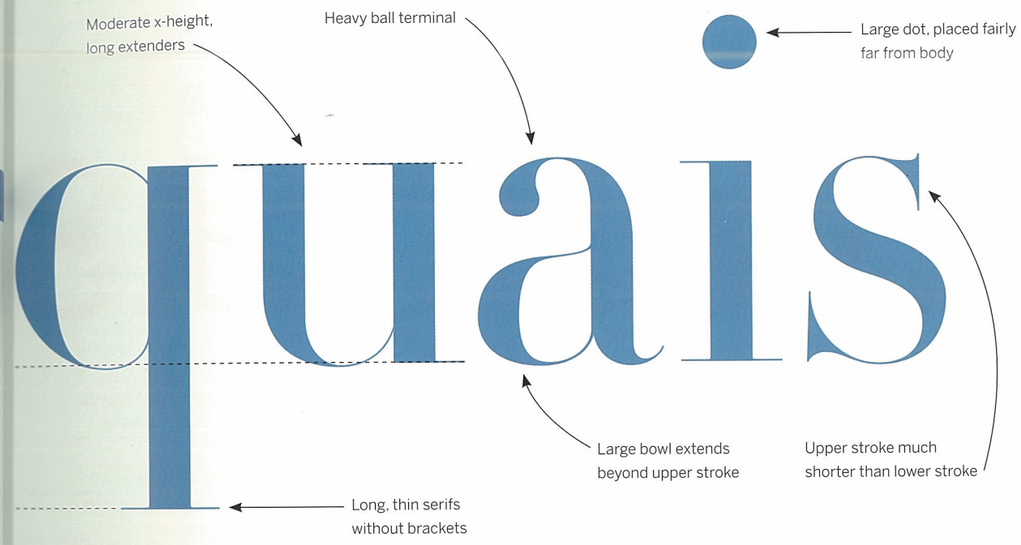
HTF Didot M96 Medium


Moderate x-height, long extenders
Heavy ball terminal
Large dot, placed fairly far from body
Retorquais
Large bowl extends beyond upper stroke
Upper stroke much shorter than lower stroke
Long, thin serifs without brackets

Of the two progenitors of the Rationalist approach – Bodoni and Didot – Didot is the more extreme. This is the furthest traditional serif type gets from calligraphic form. While most digital versions of typefaces represent just one optical size, limiting their use, **H&FJ Didot** offers seven. This is the result of a *Harper's Bazaar* commission for a new version of the face that had long been a signature of the magazine. The redesign team asked Hoefler for a family that maintained its hairline serifs over a range of sizes. Hoefler delivered seven optical sizes, each with three weights and corresponding italics. With this arsenal one can set H&FJ Didot at 6 or 96 point and it still looks like Didot. ***Good for:*** Fashion, wine, the expensive and romantic.

Compare to:

Rfaegso

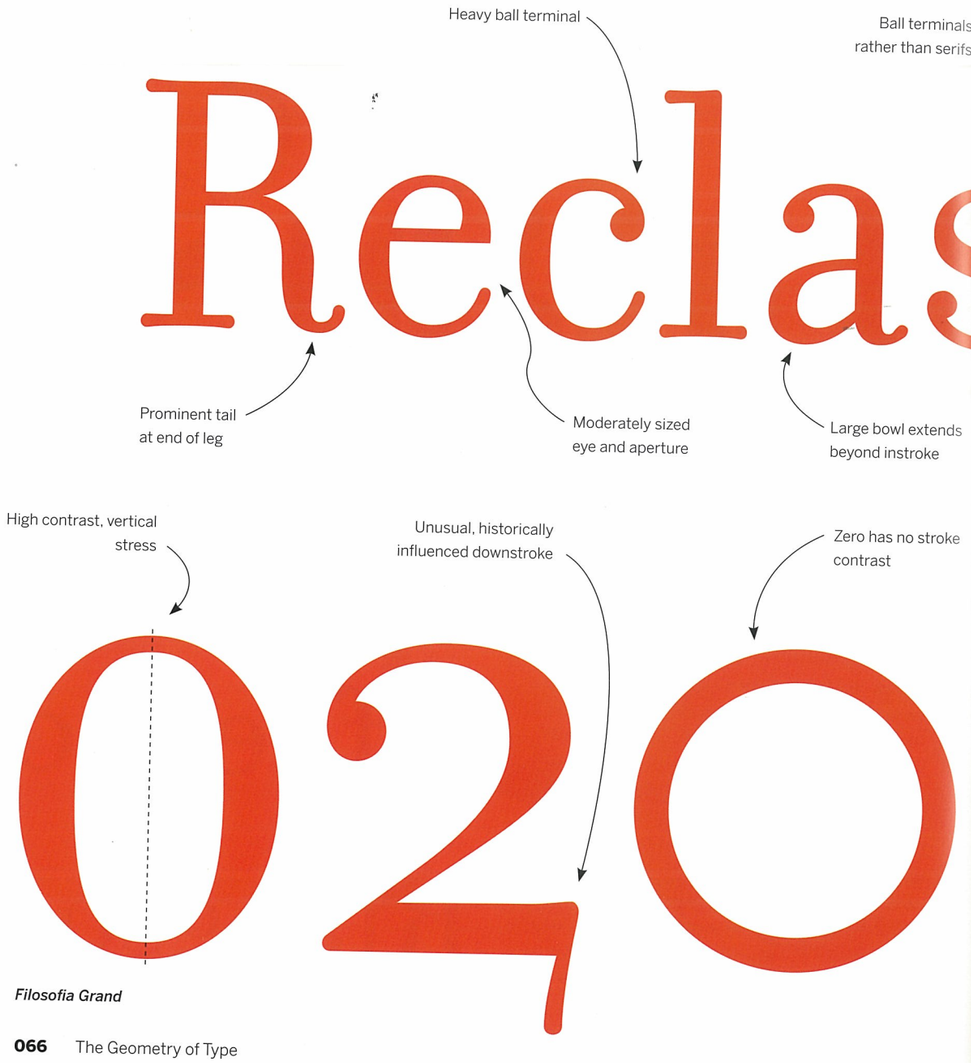
Bodoni ITC Six

Rfaegso

Bauer Bodoni

Filosofia

Designer: Zuzana Licko // **Foundry:** Emigre // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 1996 // **Classification:** Didone Serif



Filosofia Grand

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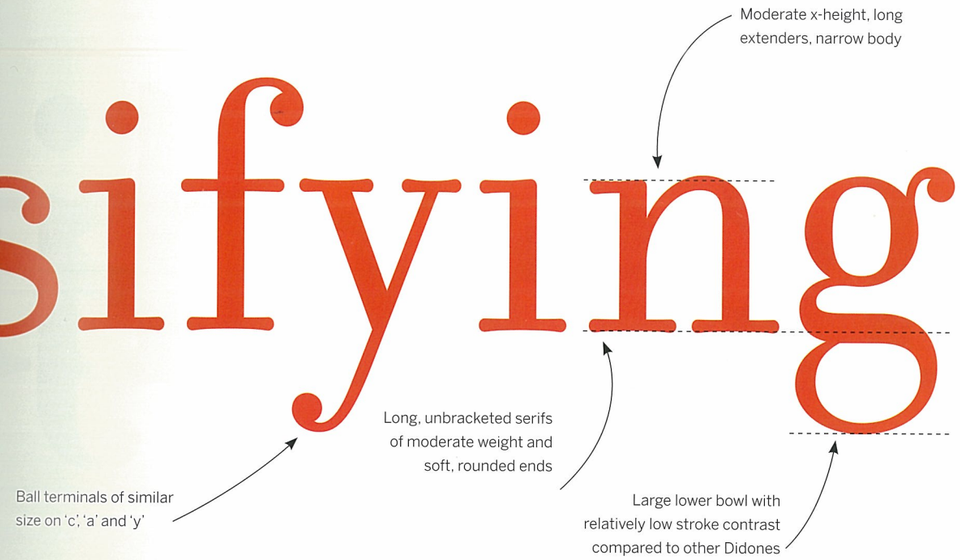
Filosofia Regular


Moderate x-height, long extenders, narrow body
Reclassifying
Long, unbracketed serifs of moderate weight and soft, rounded ends
Ball terminals of similar size on 'c', 'a' and 'y'
Large lower bowl with relatively low stroke contrast compared to other Didones

While **Filosofia** is clearly inspired by Bodoni, it departs in many ways. Zuzana Licko's invention has less contrast than most digital Bodonis, and the modulation from thick to thin is more gradual. Strokes have soft, round ends, in contrast to the abruptness of other Didones. Also, unlike Bodoni and Didot, the 's' has ball terminals – and this single distinguishing glyph has a major effect on the typeface as a whole, giving it a more ornamented, yet informal flair. All this adds up to a casual, affable attitude, relative to others in this class. Bodoni and Didot are rarified city dwellers, top-hatted patrons of the high arts. Filosofia is pretty and polite, but comes from the country. ***Good for:*** Artisanal baked goods. Fine jams and preserves.

Compare to:

Rfaegso

ITC Bodoni Six

Rfaegso

Bauer Bodoni

Farnham

Designer: (Johann Fleischman) Christian Schwartz // **Foundry:** Font Bureau // **Country of origin:** (The Netherlands) United States // **Release year:** (mid-to-late 1700s) 2004 // **Classification:** Transitional/Rational Serif

Uppercase letters have wedge serifs
Heavy wedge serifs on 'd' and 'u'
Readjusting
Tapering leg with subtle curve
Large aperture, outward-facing terminal

Farnham Display Regular Italic

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Farnham Text Regular

Fairly tall 't' with wedge-shaped ascender
Large x-height, moderate extenders
Ball terminals on 'g' and 'y'
Symmetrical, rectangular serifs without brackets

Farnham is full of energy and tension. So many ideas are tossed into a single design: angled and vertical contrast, wedges, rectangles and balls. Though some of these concepts seem to contradict each other, they all add up to a vibrant typeface that sparkles on the page without overwhelming the text. This usability comes from Christian Schwartz's pragmatic approach. Inspired by the eccentric work of 18th-century designer Johann Fleischman, Schwartz harmonised widths and shapes, opened apertures and toned things down throughout. He let loose in the Display italic swashes. Farnham isn't a neutral workhorse by any means, but it is surprisingly versatile, with separate Text and Display versions and lots of weights. ***Good for:*** Making the boring interesting.

Compare to:

Gagdecfy

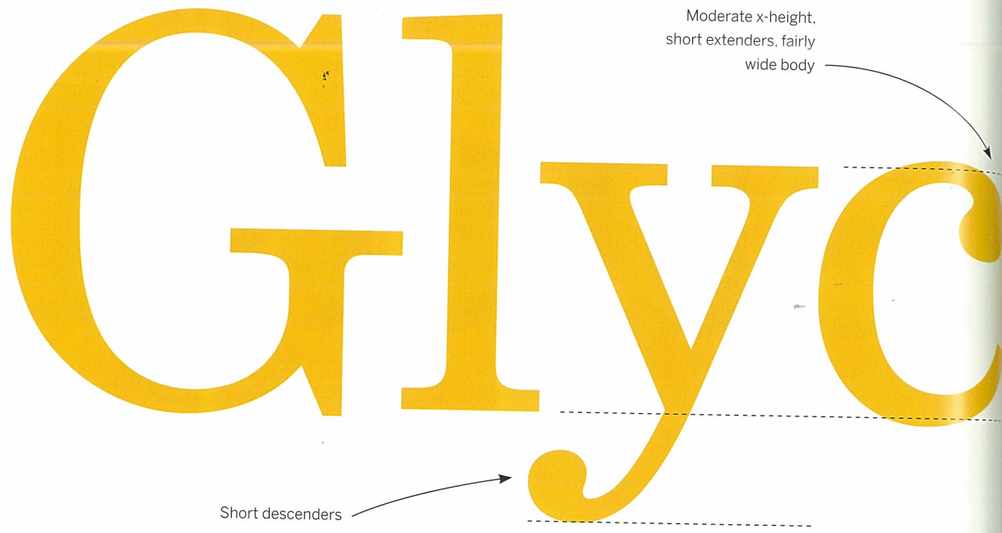
New Century Schoolbook

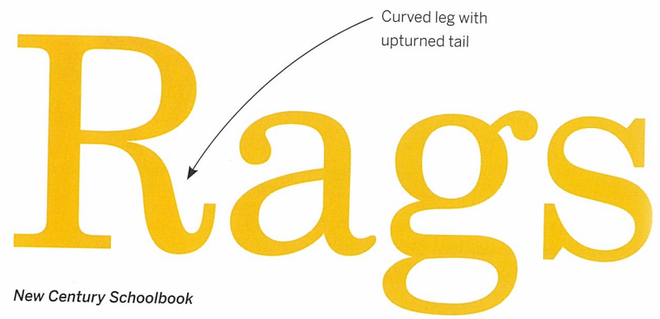
Gagdecfy

Ingeborg

New Century Schoolbook

Designer: (Morris Fuller Benton) Linotype staff // **Foundry:** Linotype // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: (1917–1923) 1980 // **Classification:** Rational Serif





New Century Schoolbook

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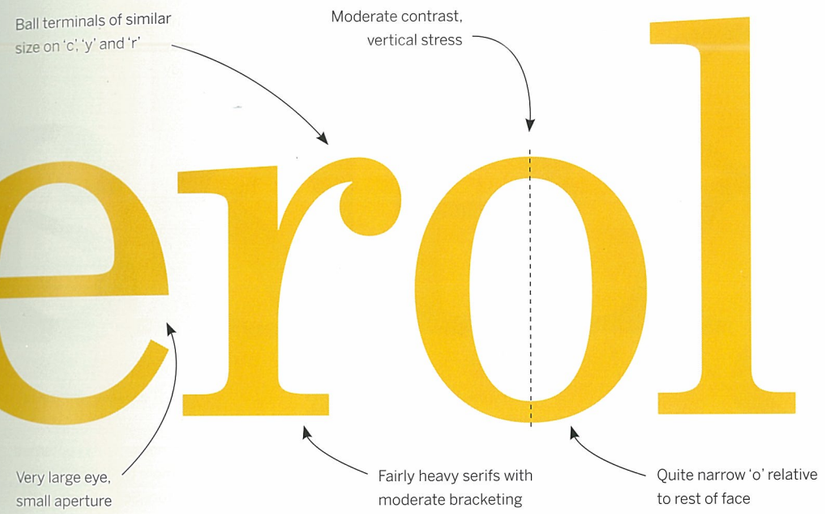
New Century Schoolbook Roman


Ball terminals of similar size on 'c,' 'y' and 'r'
Moderate contrast, vertical stress
Glycerol
Very large eye, small aperture
Fairly heavy serifs with moderate bracketing
Quite narrow 'o' relative to rest of face

For millions of Americans (and many others), **New Century Schoolbook** inspires memories of childhood days. The variation on Century was designed for educational texts and it quickly became the standard for any book intended for the youth demographic. So, the friendly, comfortable feeling of the typeface could come from a nostalgic familiarity more than any visual characteristic. Still, these letters are comfortable ones. The construction is Rational in its contrast and regularity, and no characteristic is too extreme. The large counters and ball terminals also lend a geniality, and shapes are quite round, emphasised by closed apertures. ***Good for:*** Reminiscing. Gentle instruction. Putting readers at ease.

Compare to:

Rfaegsy

Miller Text

Rfaegsy

Eames Century Modern

Miller

Designer: Matthew Carter, Tobias Frere-Jones, Cyrus Highsmith // **Foundry:** Font Bureau
Country of origin: United States // **Release years:** 1997–2000 // **Classification:** Rational Serif

Moderate contrast, vertical stress
Upturned tail
Repacking
Leg bows, ends with long serif
Outstroke ends slightly beyond body, creating a fuller, circular shape on 'e' and 'c'
Alternative 'R' has upturned tail more typical of Scotch/ Century Schoolbook
Soft R

Miller Text Italic

Miller Display Roman

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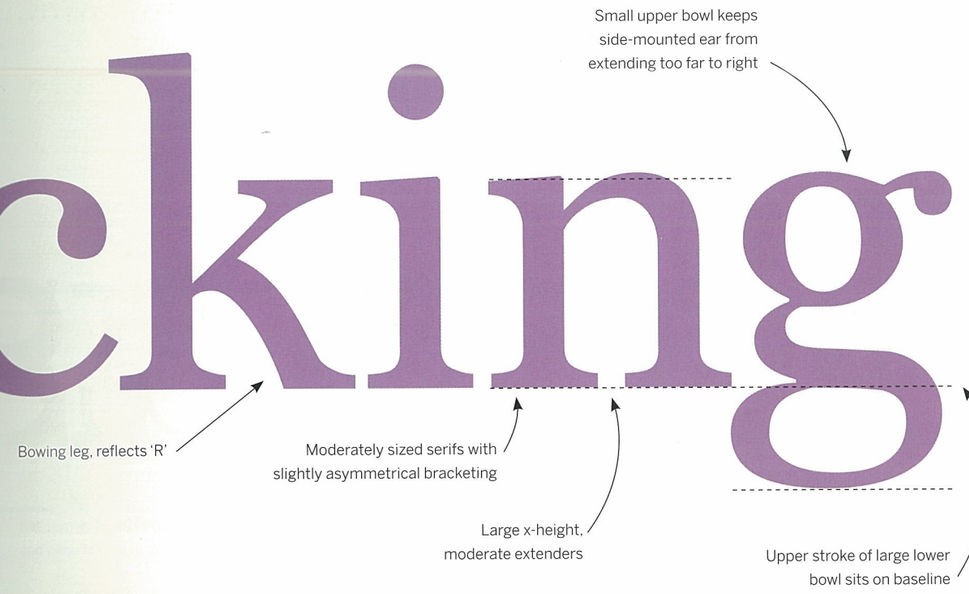
Miller Text Roman


Small upper bowl keeps side-mounted ear from extending too far to right
Bowing leg, reflects 'R'
Moderately sized serifs with slightly asymmetrical bracketing
Large x-height, moderate extenders
Upper stroke of large lower bowl sits on baseline

Miller comes from a style of Scottish type that is now frequently called *Scotch Roman*. Like other Rational serifs, there is moderate vertical stroke contrast and regular construction, but the serifs are particularly robust. It's relatively narrow, too, although that isn't obvious at first glance, making Miller popular among publication designers who appreciate sturdiness and spatial economy. There are various details – like the 'a' tail or 'k' leg – that give the face a historical touch, lending a sense of authority. Since its release in 1997 Font Bureau has expanded Miller to include versions for various headline sizes, giving magazines and newspapers even more reasons to build their designs around the family. ***Good for:*** News and other weighty content.

Compare to:

Raekg

New Century Schoolbook

Raekg

Ingeborg

Eames Century Modern

Designer: Erik van Blokland // **Foundry:** House Industries // **Country of origin:** The Netherlands, United States
Release year: 2010 // **Classification:** Rational Serif

Large upper bowl creates a low-waisted look with a wide stance

Unusually long tail turns upwards and inwards

Very large eye with small aperture

Long rectangular top serifs

Reclassifying

Moderate contrast, vertical stress

Long, upturned tail

Heavy serifs with moderate bracketing could be considered slab serifs, especially in heavier weights

Low-waisted look is even more apparent in 'P' and 'A' with their large counters

PA

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Eames Century Modern Regular

Large x-height, short extenders, fairly wide body

Relatively large dots sit close to body

Ball terminals more prominent and circular due to deep cuts

Left stroke ends just above baseline

Although its namesakes never made a typeface, this is an appropriate tribute. The work of Charles and Ray Eames was always tinged with levity, and Erik van Blokland's play on the **New Century Schoolbook** style is a lively one indeed. Its frisky qualities are particularly visible in its extreme weights, but you can see them in the Regular too. Tails curve inwards. Ball terminals proudly dangle. Many letters have a large upper body and low waist, giving the slightest comic effect. The 'e', with its big eye, seems to smile. Perhaps these personifications are exaggerations, but this face is not as sober as Century Schoolbook or **Clarendon** (another close relative). Once the bell rings and you're done with your Schoolbook, this is what you take out for fun. ***Good for:*** Well-crafted whimsy.

Compare to:

Rfaegsy

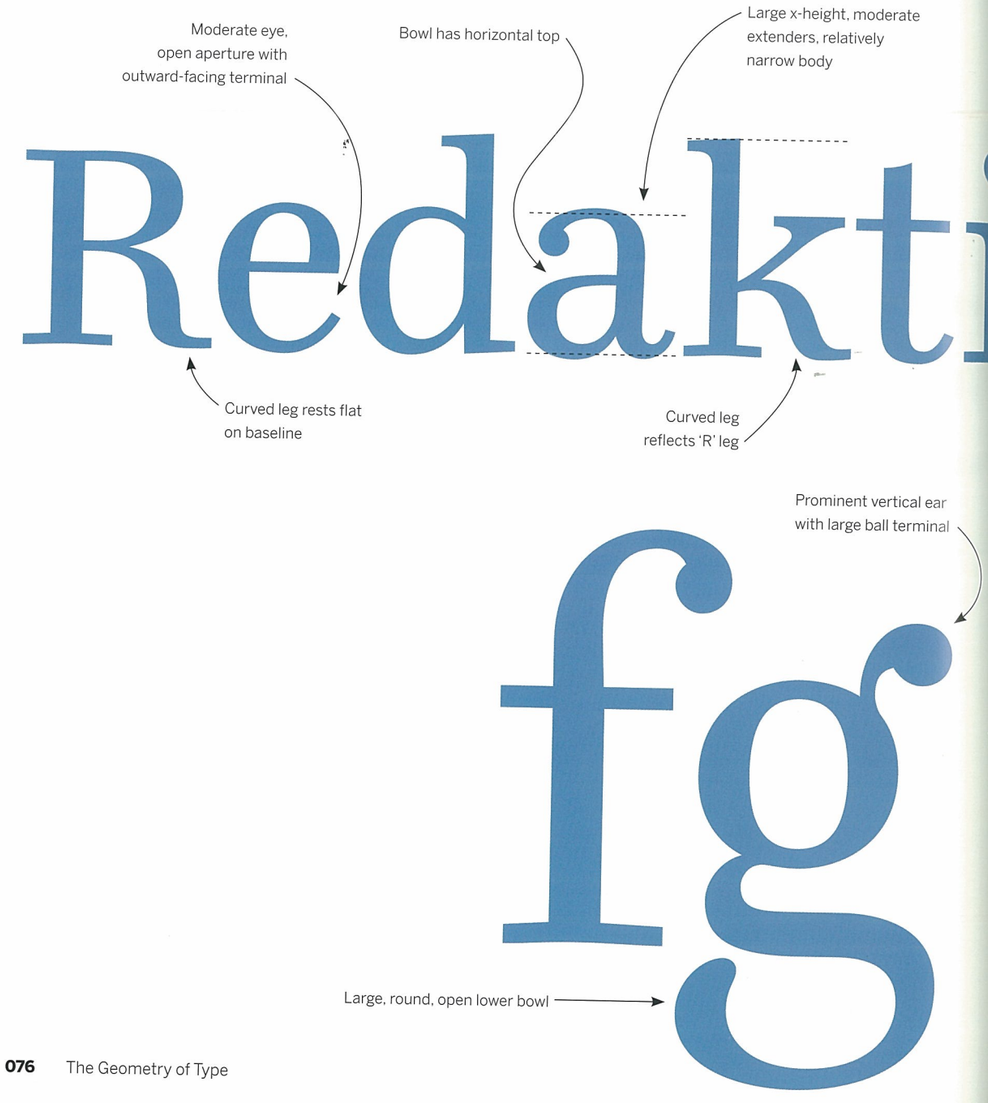
New Century Schoolbook

Rfaegsy

Clarendon

Ingeborg

Designer: Michael Hochleitner // **Foundry:** Typejockeys // **Country of origin:** Austria
Release year: 2009 // **Classification:** Rational Serif


Moderate eye, open aperture with outward-facing terminal
Bowl has horizontal top
Large x-height, moderate extenders, relatively narrow body
Redaktionsruta
Curved leg rests flat on baseline
Curved leg reflects 'R' leg
Prominent vertical ear with large ball terminal
fg
Large, round, open lower bowl

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890 163

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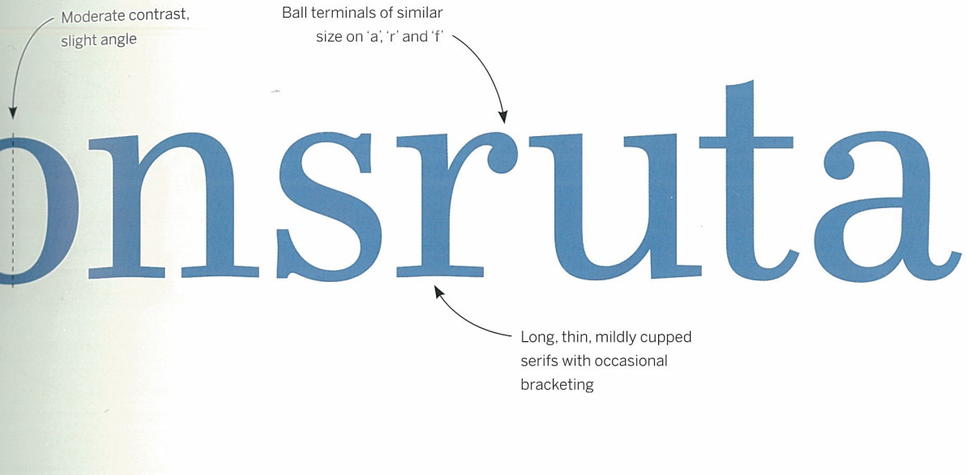
Ingeborg Regular


Moderate contrast, slight angle
Ball terminals of similar size on 'a', 'r' and 'f'
Long, thin, mildly cupped serifs with occasional bracketing

Most people will likely encounter **Ingeborg**'s showy Display variants: the decorative fill and shadow of Block, and the buxom swashes of Fat Italic. These are indeed finely crafted crowd-pleasers, but the typeface's more important contribution to typography is in the text weights. Michael Hochleitner managed to comfortably combine the neoclassical glamour of Didones, the readability of other Rational typefaces like the Scotch Romans, and the sturdiness of a slab serif. The result is a very original design that is both beautiful and practical. ***Good for:*** Books. Magazines. Substance and style.

Compare to:

QRgkaef

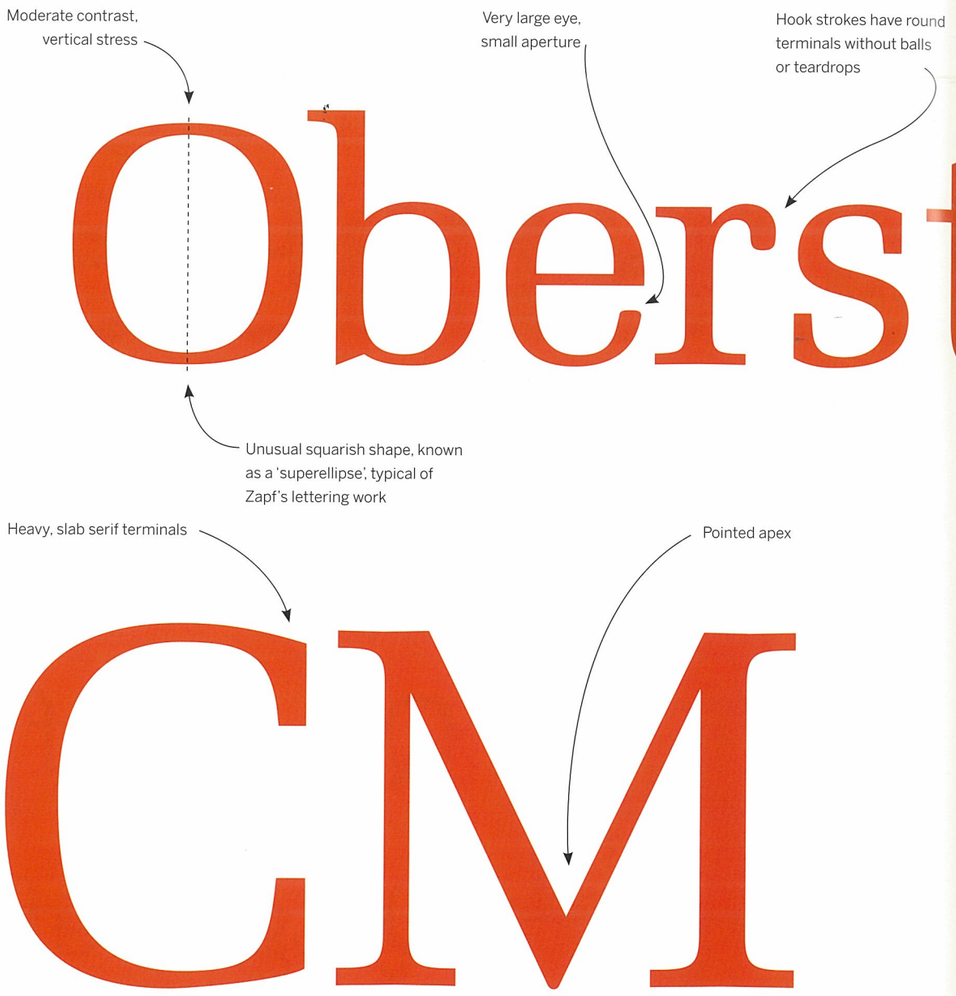
Miller Text

QRgkaef

Eames Century Modern

Melior

Designer: Hermann Zapf // **Foundry:** D. Stempel AG, Linotype // **Country of origin:** Germany
Release year: 1952 // **Classification:** Rational Serif


Moderate contrast, vertical stress
Very large eye, small aperture
Hook strokes have round terminals without balls or teardrops
Unusual squarish shape, known as a 'superellipse', typical of Zapf's lettering work
Heavy, slab serif terminals
Pointed apex
Oberständig
CM

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abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890

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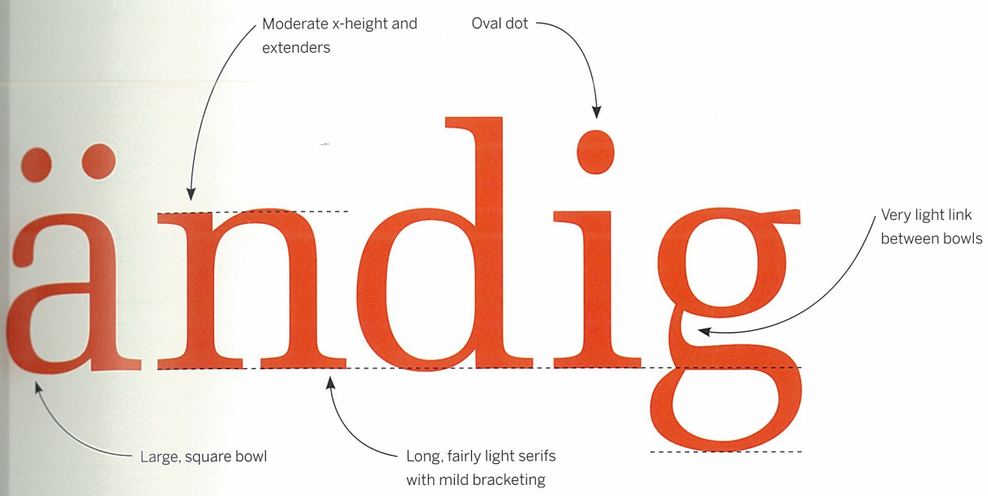
Melior



Melior is one of the few serif typefaces with round forms based on the *superellipse*, an oval with nearly flat sides. This squarish shape is much more common in sans serifs, particularly Grotesques and square Geometrics, making Melior an unusually harmonious serif companion for typefaces like **Univers** and Eurostile. The superellipse – also common in Hermann Zapf's lettering for book covers – can feel dated, perhaps because it brings to mind the shape of a vintage TV screen. Melior's rounded terminals ('a', 'e', 'r') are also typical of the soft, unfocused type of the phototype era. Still, Melior remains a unique typeface, a milestone of its time with ideas that are still rare in new designs. ***Good for:*** Sober, readable text. Referencing the 1960s–80s.

Compare to:

Oargey

Univers 55

Oargey

Forza

Contemporary Serif

82 Neue Swift

84 Skolar

86 Fedra Serif

88 FF Meta Serif

90 Doko

XXXXX

Background typefaces are Doko and Neue Swift

Neue Swift

Designer: Gerard Unger // **Foundry:** Linotype // **Country of origin:** The Netherlands
Release years: 1985 (Swift), 1995 (Swift 2.0), 2009 // **Classification:** Contemporary Serif

Blunt, wedge-shaped ends are prominent on terminating horizontal strokes

Arch strokes are quite flat with pronounced tapering

Transmogrify

Moderate bowl and large aperture

Long, sharp, wedge-shaped serifs

Angled bar tapers at left, increasing size of eye

eukJ

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890 163

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Neue Swift Regular

Moderate contrast, slight angle

Simple wedge-shaped ear

Oval dot

Arch extends deep over neighbouring letter

Large x-height, short ascenders, moderate descenders

Horizontal stroke of lower bowl sits on baseline

Wedge-shaped serifs (like the wings of the bird that give **Neue Swift** its name), along with the large x-height and open apertures, were remedies for the poor quality of newspaper printing in the 1980s. They also produce a strong horizontal flow, appropriate for quick, easy reading. These functional aspects gave the typeface a very distinctive look and were soon seen as aesthetic advantages for branding and magazines, where they added a fresh crispness to text. Gerard Unger and others have improved and expanded the typeface over the years, and the current version has more weights than the original. See also Matthew Carter's Charter, which was developed around the same time and features similar design ideas.

Compare to:

rsafgmnocj

Times New Roman

rsafgmnocj

Lexicon No.1

Skolar

Designer: David Březina // **Foundry:** TypeTogether // **Country of origin:** Czech Republic
Release year: 2009 // **Classification:** Contemporary Serif

Dots are organic shapes, not circles
Angular, upturned tail
Prominent beak
Outer shape (contour) is smooth, but inner shape (counter) has corners, creating tension and energy
Heavy, blunt wedge serifs are slightly asymmetrical throughout
Low contrast, strong angle
Fairly heavy curved leg
Large eye and aperture

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1234567890 163 ¼⅔⅝ [àóüßç](.,:;?!$£&-*){ÀÓÜÇ}

Skolar Regular

Prominent beak
Ink trap (visible only at display sizes)
Fairly large x-height, moderate extenders
Prominent angled ear echoes size and shape of beaks
Binocular form with large counters

While **Skolar** has conventional bones – a standard Humanist skeleton with short caps – its muscles make it new. The very low contrast and hefty serifs follow a contemporary trend that began with typefaces like **Fedra Serif**. But unlike Fedra, Skolar goes easy on the eccentricity. Its main calling card is the prominent beak serifs found on the 'a' and 's'. Though these reduce apertures, they successfully add to the dark colour of the type without hindering legibility. Another key trait is the angularity of the counters in many glyphs, which contradict their smooth outlines and create a vigorous tension. This technique has become a signature of the MA Typeface Design programme at the UK's Reading University, where David Březina created Skolar.

Compare to:

Gafgrksy

Fedra Serif A

Gafgrksy

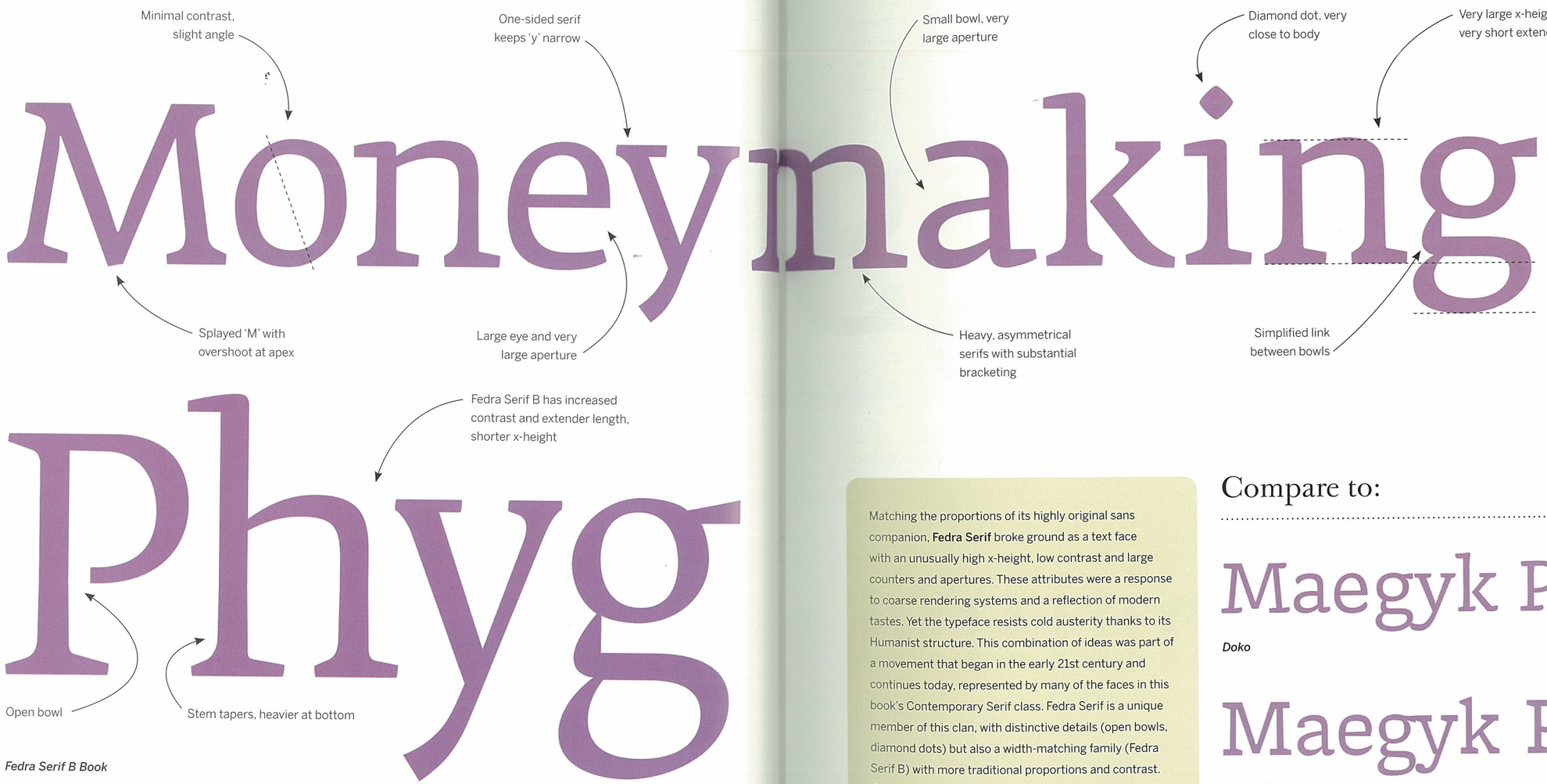
Doko

Gafgrksy

Rumba Small

Fedra Serif

Designer: Peter Bilak // **Foundry:** Typotheque // **Country of origin:** The Netherlands
Release years: 2003–2009 // **Classification:** Humanist Serif


Minimal contrast, slight angle
One-sided serif keeps 'y' narrow
Moneymaking
Splayed 'M' with overshoot at apex
Large eye and very large aperture
Fedra Serif B has increased contrast and extender length, shorter x-height
Phyg
Open bowl
Stem tapers, heavier at bottom

Fedra Serif B Book

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890
163 ¼ ⅔ ⅝ [àóüßç](.,:;?!$£&-*){ÀÓÜÇ}

Fedra Serif A Book

Small bowl, very large aperture
Diamond dot, very close to body
Very large x-height, very short extenders
Heavy, asymmetrical serifs with substantial bracketing
Simplified link between bowls

Matching the proportions of its highly original sans companion, **Fedra Serif** broke ground as a text face with an unusually high x-height, low contrast and large counters and apertures. These attributes were a response to coarse rendering systems and a reflection of modern tastes. Yet the typeface resists cold austerity thanks to its Humanist structure. This combination of ideas was part of a movement that began in the early 21st century and continues today, represented by many of the faces in this book's Contemporary Serif class. Fedra Serif is a unique member of this clan, with distinctive details (open bowls, diamond dots) but also a width-matching family (Fedra Serif B) with more traditional proportions and contrast.
Good for: Dense but dynamic text. Very small type.

Compare to:

Maegyk P

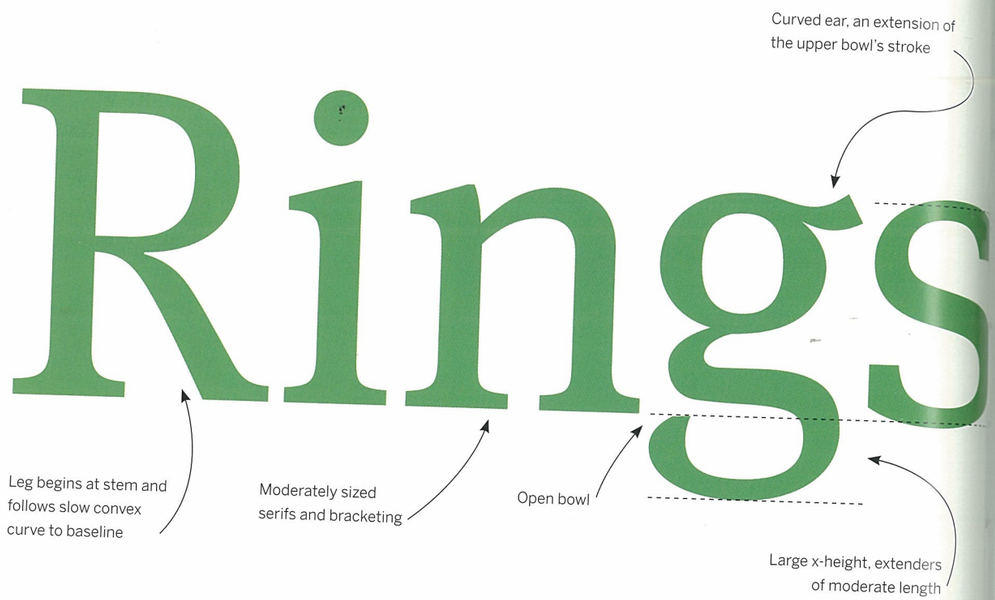
Doko

Maegyk P

Freight Micro

FF Meta Serif

Designer: Erik Spiekermann, Christian Schwartz, Kris Sowersby // **Foundry:** FontFont
Country of origin: Germany // **Release year:** 2007 // **Classification:** Contemporary Serif


Curved ear, an extension of the upper bowl's stroke
Ringstraße
Leg begins at stem and follows slow convex curve to baseline
Moderately sized serifs and bracketing
Open bowl
Large x-height, extenders of moderate length

MetaUnitUnit

FF Meta *FF Unit* *FF Unit Slab*

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abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890 163

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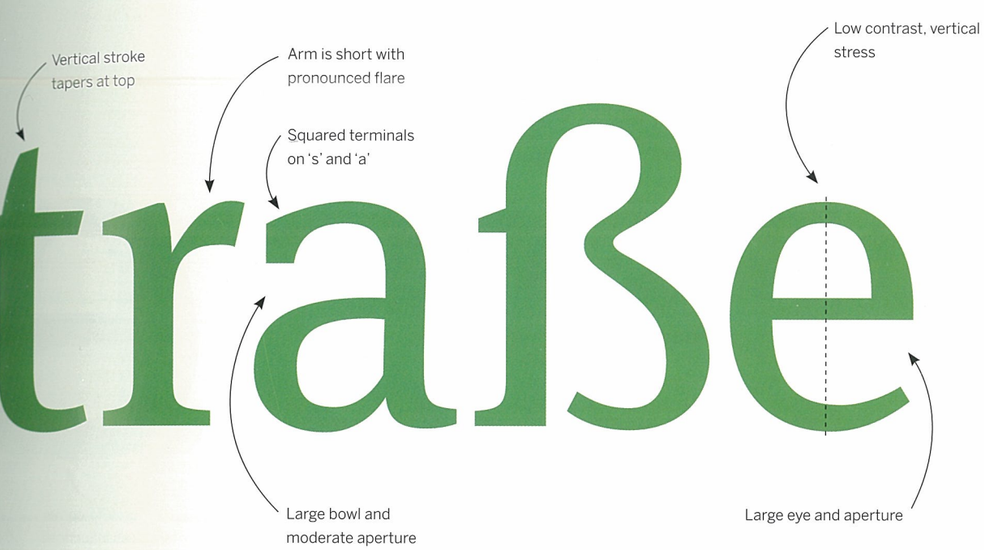
FF Meta Serif Book


Vertical stroke tapers at top
Arm is short with pronounced flare
Squared terminals on 's' and 'a'
Low contrast, vertical stress
Large bowl and moderate aperture
Large eye and aperture

Erik Spiekermann's response to demand for a serif version of his most popular typeface is this collaboration with Christian Schwartz and Kris Sowersby. **FF Meta Serif** is much more than **FF Meta** with serifs. The typeface retains some of FF Meta's charm, but is slightly more restrained, a capable workhorse in nearly any context. Despite this moderate approach, FF Meta Serif sports some distinctive features: squared terminals on 'a' and 's', robust serifs, contemporary proportions and of course the trademark open-bowled 'g'. Not only do the FF Meta companions play well together, but they were also designed to work with FF Unit and **FF Unit Slab**, forming a multifaceted palette for complex hierarchies.

Compare to:

Rrgaes

Fedra Serif A

Rrgaes

Skolar

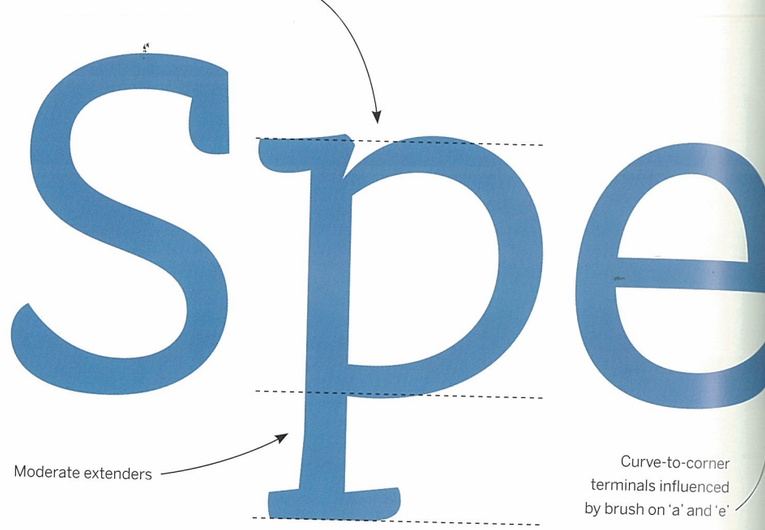
Doko

Designer: Ondrej Jób // **Foundry:** Urdt // **Country of origin:** Slovakia, The Netherlands
Release year: 2011 // **Classification:** Contemporary Serif

Curves thin slightly when they meet stems, but weight compensation is also handled by a notch into the stem

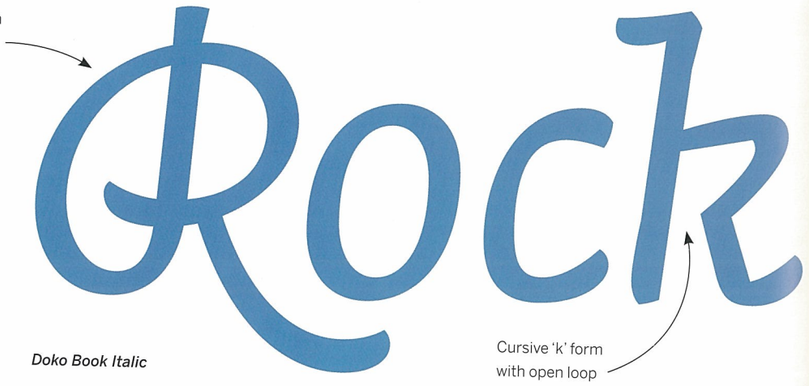
Moderate extenders

Curve-to-corner terminals influenced by brush on 'a' and 'e'



Flamboyant swash alternates in italic

Cursive 'k' form with open loop



Doko Book Italic

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abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890 163

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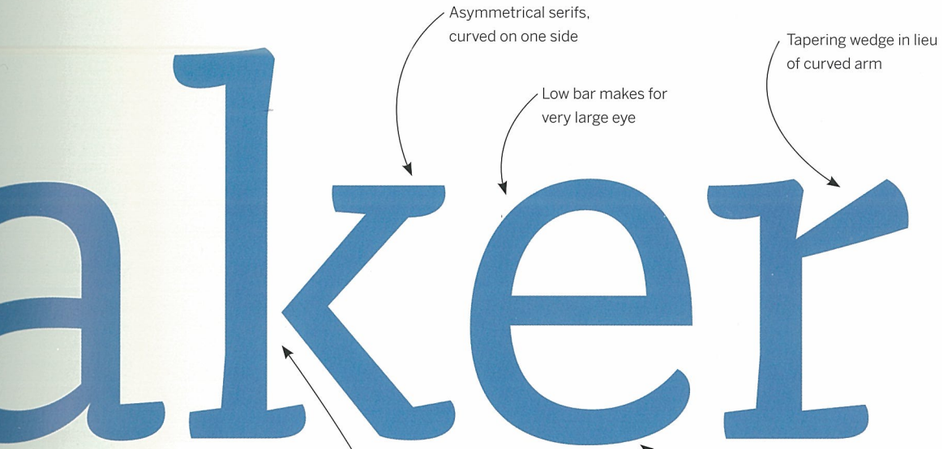
Doko Book

Asymmetrical serifs, curved on one side

Low bar makes for very large eye

Tapering wedge in lieu of curved arm



Fairly large bowl and aperture

Diagonal strokes do not meet stem

Very little stroke contrast, slight weight gain only at terminals

Doko takes the Contemporary Humanist serif to playful extremes. Inspired by the hand-lettering of cartoons and informal illustration, it dances on the line between expressiveness and functionality, Display type and Text type. As Ondrej Jób's project originated at the Royal Academy of Art (KABK) in The Hague, one can see evidence of Dutch pioneers in Doko – such as the pointed brush-like terminals of **Lexicon** or the minimal contrast and proportions of **Fedra Serif**. But Doko's top-heavy body and animated swash italic adds a chipper, lighthearted vibe to the bloodline. Despite all the frivolity, Doko is built like a standard text family: regular and bold with italics and multiple figure styles. ***Good for:*** Making something fun, light-hearted or approachable.

Compare to:

Srasek

Auto 1

Srasek

Auto 3 Italic

Inscribed/Engraved

94 LUXURY DIAMOND

96 Albertus

98 Modesto

100 TRAJAN

XXxX

Background typefaces are Luxury Diamond and Modesto

Luxury Diamond

Designer: Christian Schwartz, Dino Sanchez // **Foundry:** House Industries // **Country of origin:** United States
Release years: 2002–2006 // **Classification:** Engraved

High contrast, vertical stress
Very wide body, small caps only slightly shorter than caps
Top serif references decorative engravers, lettering and marks of luxury brands
QUARRIES
Complex tail with curves reflected in alternative 'R' and figures
Notched 'R' references 19th-century style, also found in Prada logo

When Luxury first launched it had a price tag of £1,000 for three fonts. Of course, it was a tongue-in-cheek conceptual stunt, a comment on the exclusivity of brands like Prada, Chanel and Gucci. The fonts were later reissued by House Industries with conventional pricing. Publicity gimmicks aside, the designs are a brilliant celebration (or mockery) of common trends in luxury branding. The most recognisable of the three typefaces is **Luxury Diamond**, an encapsulation metal engraving style, with its long triangular serifs, wide stance and decorative details, such as the notched 'R' and curvaceous figures. There is also a Text family with a full lowercase character set. ***Good for:*** Raising a product's perceived value. Filling horizontal space.

Compare to:

QUARES425

Trajan

QUARES425

Bauer Bodoni

Albertus

Designer: Berthold Wolpe // **Foundry:** Monotype // **Country of origin:** United Kingdom
Release year: 1940 // **Classification:** Inscribed

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abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890
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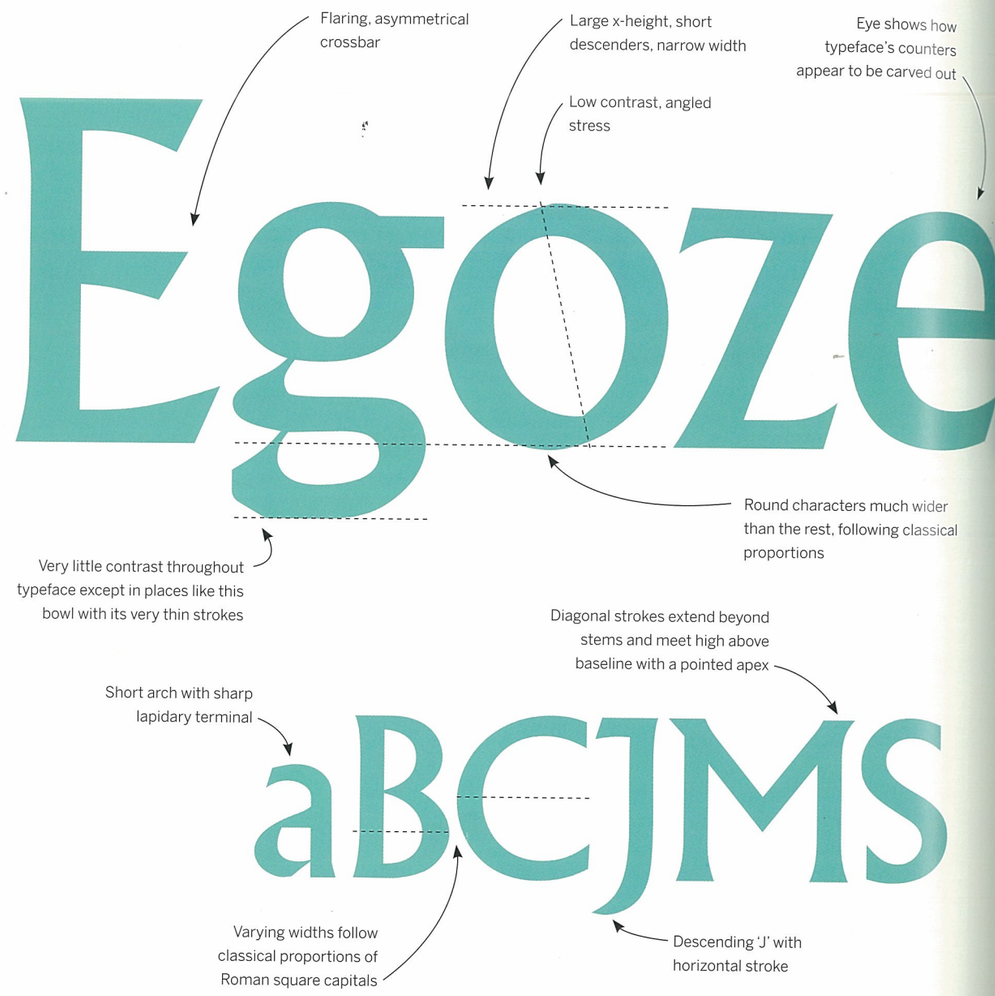
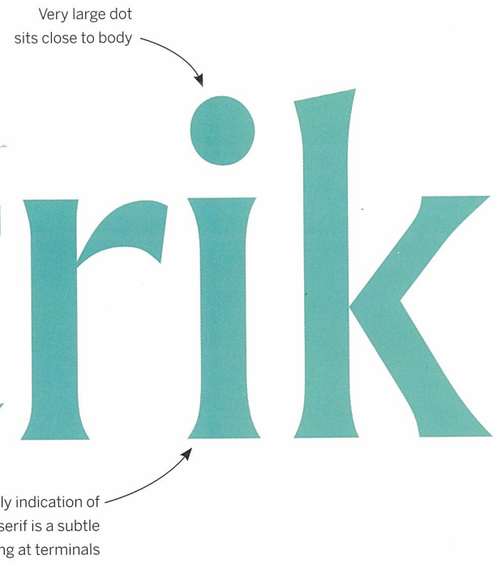
Albertus Regular


Flaring, asymmetrical crossbar
Large x-height, short descenders, narrow width
Eye shows how typeface's counters appear to be carved out
Low contrast, angled stress
Egozentrik
Round characters much wider than the rest, following classical proportions
Very little contrast throughout typeface except in places like this bowl with its very thin strokes
Diagonal strokes extend beyond stems and meet high above baseline with a pointed apex
Short arch with sharp lapidary terminal
aBCJMS
Varying widths follow classical proportions of Roman square capitals
Descending 'J' with horizontal stroke



In 1932, Monotype's Stanley Morison asked Berthold Wolpe to create a typeface based on his inscriptional lettering. The result is **Albertus**, a design that shows clear signs of its carved origins. The model letters were raised from the surface of bronze tablets, not debossed, which may explain the unusual angular shape of the counters, which were carved out of the lettershapes rather than the other way around. Flared terminals – in lieu of conventional serifs – were also a result of this technique. Albertus has become one of the trademarks of London, used for many of its road signs and official placards. ***Good for:*** An official or ceremonial aura, without the pomposity of **Trajan**. Emulating wood- or stone-carved letters.

Compare to:

ACEGJMORS

Optima Bold

ACEGJMORS

Trajan Bold

Modesto

Designer: Jim Parkinson // **Foundry:** Parkinson // **Country of origin:** United States
Release years: 2000–2003 // **Classification:** Glyphic

Simple form without horizontal bar, serifs at terminals only

Curved strokes are generally cut at an angle away from body of each letter, making a pointed terminal

Grandiosa

Convex crossbar references signpainter styles and makes room for counter in heavy weights

Tiny serifs with mild bracketing

AQ

Modesto Initials

Modesto Expanded

Modesto Open

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890

¼ ½ ¾ [àóüßç](.,:;?!$£&-*){ÀÓÜÇ}

Modesto Text Medium

Large x-height, short extenders

Oval dot matches width of stem without being too large

Almost perfect circle

Grandiosa

Imperceptible contrast, vertical strokes only slightly heavier than horizontal

Jim Parkinson has made a habit of translating the styles of hand-letterers and sign-painters – particularly those of America – to typefaces. **Modesto** incorporates various elements of early 20th-century lettering, with its simplified, monolinear Gothic construction, short descenders, bowed 'A', and tiny serifs. The family features a carnival of options, from narrow to wide, and inlined to outlined. And despite Modesto's natural proclivity for Display settings, there are Text weights. These happen to be an interesting option for anyone who seeks a lowercase in the style of Copperplate Gothic, the popular turn-of-the-century typeface with a similar structure and serifs. ***Good for:*** An antique, handmade feel. Wholesome, vintage Americana.

Compare to:

GANDIOS

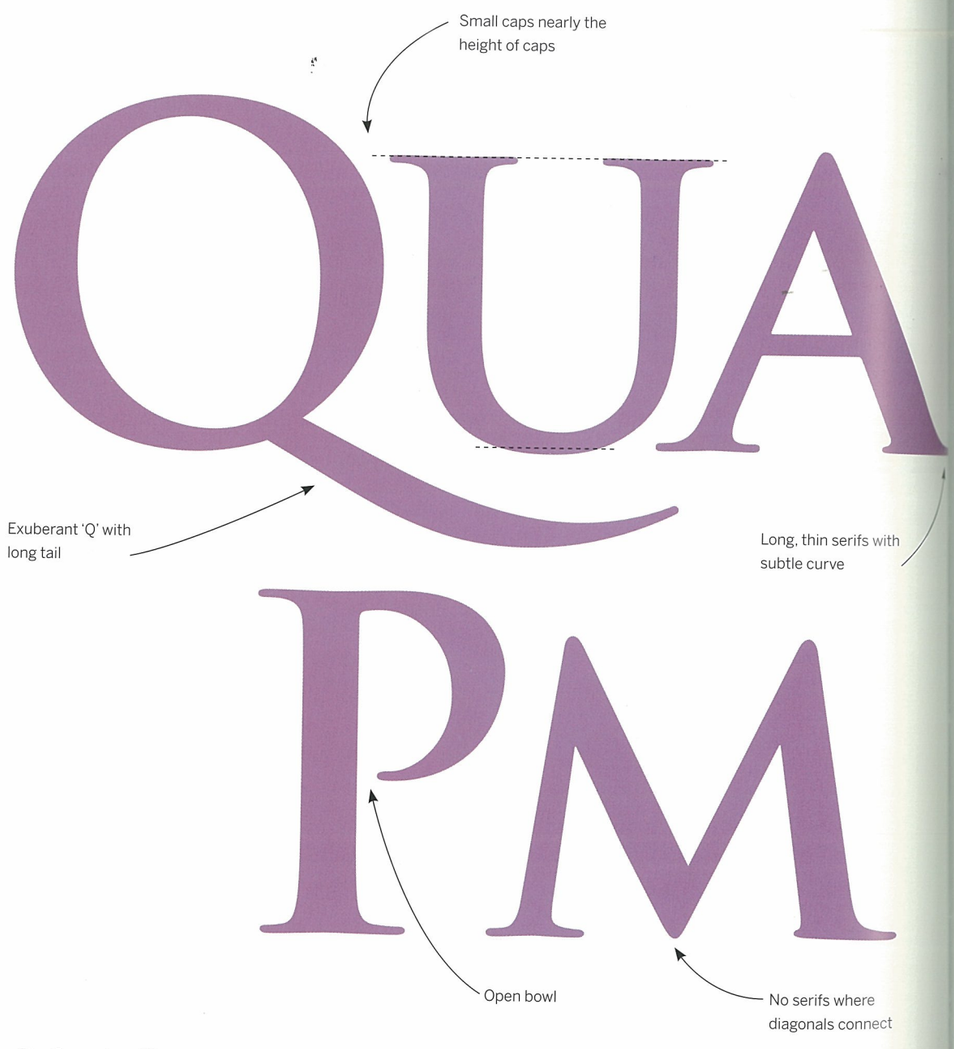
Copperplate Gothic 31 AB

Gandios

Gotham

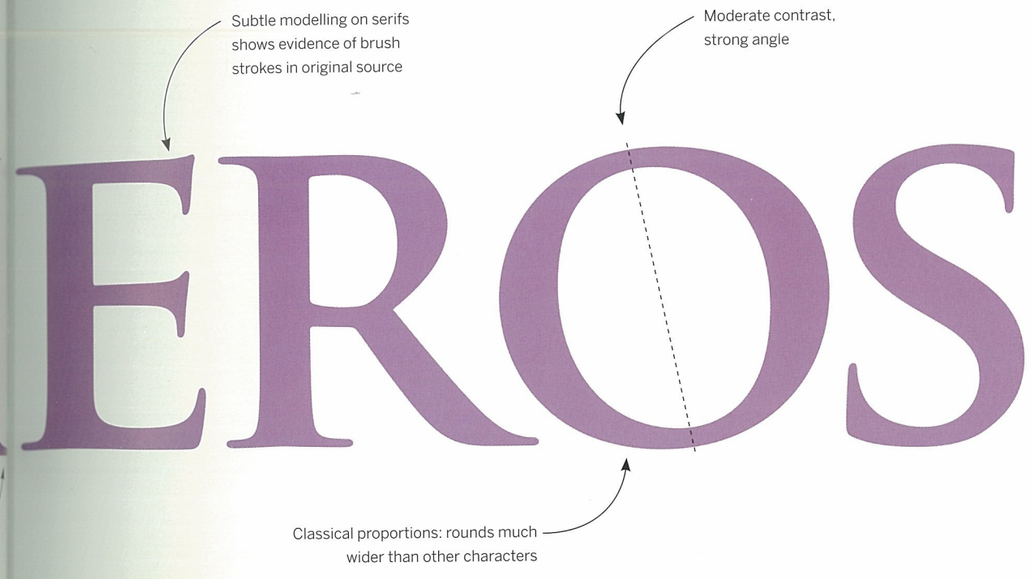
Trajan

Designer: Carol Twombly // **Foundry:** Adobe // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 1989 // **Classification:** Inscribed


Small caps nearly the height of caps
Exuberant 'Q' with long tail
Long, thin serifs with subtle curve
Open bowl
No serifs where diagonals connect

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ 12345
67890 163 ¼ ½ ¾ [ÀÓÜÇ](.,:;?!$£&-*){ÀÓÜÇ}

Trajan Bold


Subtle modelling on serifs shows evidence of brush strokes in original source
Moderate contrast, strong angle
Classical proportions: rounds much wider than other characters

Trajan is synonymous with drama. This association is partly a result of Trajan's overuse in film posters – it has become the subject of internet parodies and design conference lectures. But these letters are pretty dramatic on their own – from the classical *capitalis monumentalis* proportions to the long, sweeping strokes and serifs. Carol Twombly's source was Trajan's Column, an early 2nd-century monument in Rome. While the letters were inscribed into stone with a chisel, recent research suggests that they were first painted with a brush, which explains their graceful serifs. There are many other interpretations of this style, including Goudy, Pietra, Waters Titling and Penumbra. ***Good for:*** Drama, of course. Majesty. Momentous events.

Compare to:

QUAEROS

Optima

Grotesque Sans

104 **Bureau Grot**

106 Knockout

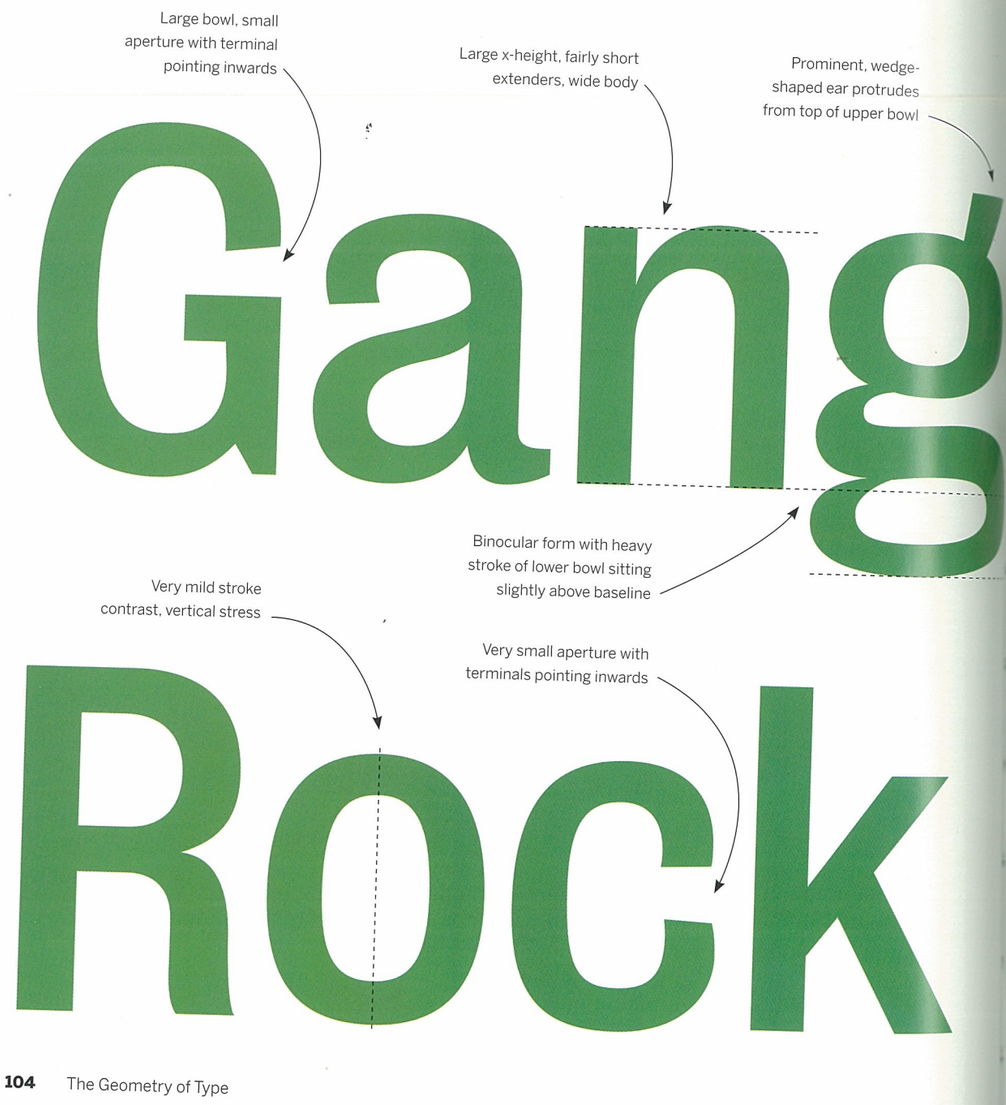
108 **FF Bau**

XxX

Background typefaces are Bureau Grot and FF Bau

Bureau Grot

Designer: David Berlow, Jill Pichotta, Christian Schwartz, Richard Lipton // **Foundry:** Font Bureau
Country of origin: United States // **Release years:** 1989–1993 (Bureau Grotesque) 2006 // **Classification:** Grotesque Sans


Large bowl, small aperture with terminal pointing inwards
Large x-height, fairly short extenders, wide body
Prominent, wedge-shaped ear protrudes from top of upper bowl
Gangster
Binocular form with heavy stroke of lower bowl sitting slightly above baseline
Very mild stroke contrast, vertical stress
Very small aperture with terminals pointing inwards
Rock

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890
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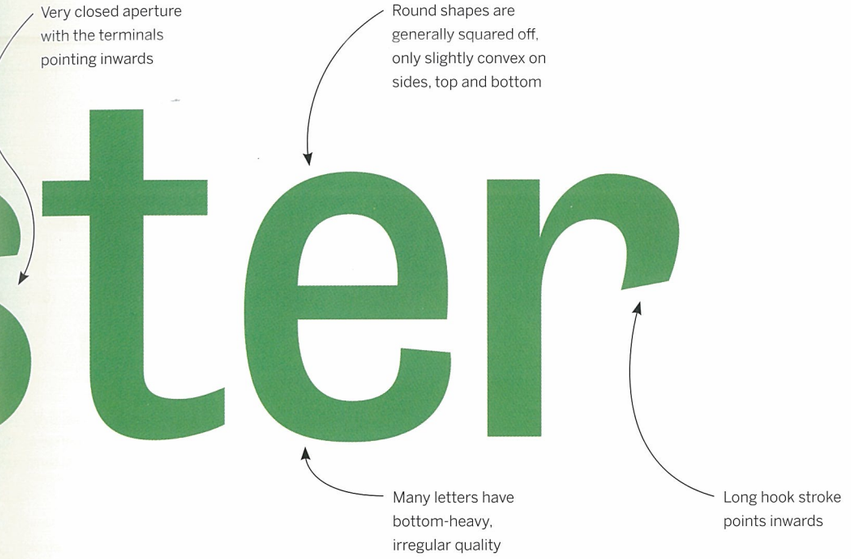
Bureau Grot Book


Very closed aperture with the terminals pointing inwards
Round shapes are generally squared off, only slightly convex on sides, top and bottom
Gangster
Many letters have bottom-heavy, irregular quality
Long hook stroke points inwards

The English Grotesques that inspired **Bureau Grot** come from the 19th century, when sans serifs had a warmth and life that was slowly drained from them as modernism took hold. Shapes are irregular and organic, modulating strokes curve in towards the body and terminate at varying angles. All of this gives David Berlow's typeface a dynamic, energetic feeling. Ever since its release as Bureau Grotesque in 1989, the multi-weight, multi-width family has been popular with newspapers and magazines, which have enjoyed having a style to fit any space. It was expanded even further in 2006, and the fonts were revised and given more conventional names.
Good for: Lively headlines of nearly any dimension.

Compare to:

GRarsteg

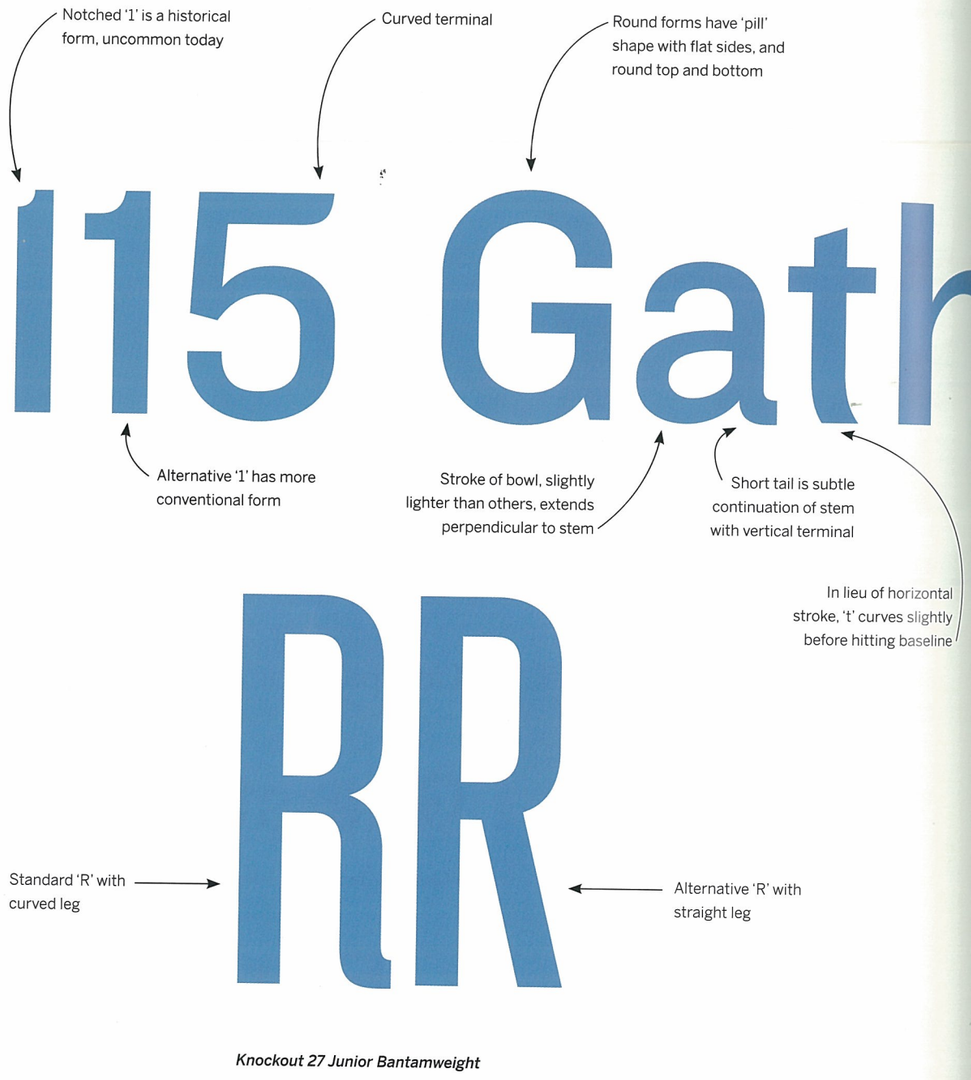
Knockout 31 Junior Middleweight

GRarsteg

FF Bau

Knockout

Designer: Jonathan Hoefler // **Foundry:** Hoefler & Frere-Jones // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 1994 // **Classification:** Grotesque Sans


Notched '1' is a historical form, uncommon today
Curved terminal
Round forms have 'pill' shape with flat sides, and round top and bottom
115 Gatherings
Alternative '1' has more conventional form
Stroke of bowl, slightly lighter than others, extends perpendicular to stem
Short tail is subtle continuation of stem with vertical terminal
In lieu of horizontal stroke, 't' curves slightly before hitting baseline
RR
Standard 'R' with curved leg
Alternative 'R' with straight leg

Knockout 27 Junior Bantamweight

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890
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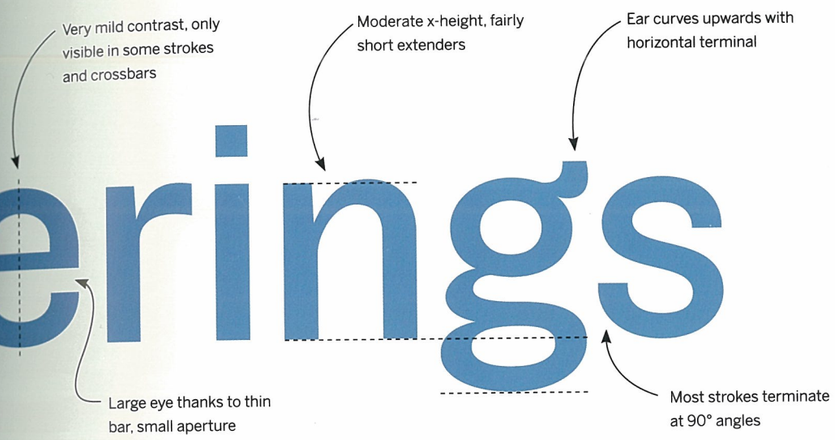
Knockout 31 Junior Middleweight


Very mild contrast, only visible in some strokes and crossbars
Moderate x-height, fairly short extenders
Ear curves upwards with horizontal terminal
Gatherings
Large eye thanks to thin bar, small aperture
Most strokes terminate at 90° angles

Knockout was, like **Bureau Grot**, influenced by sans serifs of the 1800s and early 1900s, many of which were wood types, each designed separately for a specific weight and width, and not necessarily in the same family. Jonathan Hoefler brought these varying designs into one unifying family yet retained their individualism where appropriate. So, any single style we show above will be slightly unlike the others, whether it's the flat terminals of the narrow fonts that give them a compact, upright stature, or the dramatically increased contrast in the bold fonts that lets them appear even heavier. This wide range of personalities and dimensions can make Knockout even more versatile than a larger, more homogenous family.
Good for: Just about any design but the most modern.

Compare to:

Rtage 1

Bureau Grot

Rtage 1

Neue Helvetica

FF Bau

Designer: (Unknown) Christian Schwartz // **Foundry:** (Schelter & Giesecke) FontFont // **Country of origin:** (Germany) USA
Release year: (late 1800s to early 1900s) 2002 // **Classification:** Grotesque Sans

Caps are quite broad and generally share similar width
Square dot
R
R
Alternative 'R' with straight leg
Standard 'R' has curved leg
Proportions vary considerably in other weights
gans
Tail is maintained, even in heaviest weight (unlike Helvetica)
Shape changes dramatically in heavy weights with terminals facing outwards

FF Bau Super

FF Bau Medium

Moderately large bowl, aperture is not large but relatively open due to outward-facing terminal
Moderate x-height and extenders, fairly wide body in medium weight
Ringelgans
Alternative, monocular 'g'
Terminals land close to spine, trimmed perpendicular to stroke
Moderately sized eye, fairly closed aperture. Terminal follows stroke direction

The roots of Helvetica – such as Schelter & Giesecke's late 19th-century 'Grotesk' – are much warmer and more irregular than the calculated modernist icon that would follow. **FF Bau** is a revival of that early Grot, a mainstay of the celebrated Bauhaus in Dessau. Christian Schwartz closely followed the three original weights and added a 'Super' heavy weight, which required some changes in form, but retains the tailed 'a', unlike Helvetica's bolds. This, along with the other angled, outward-facing terminals, can make FF Bau more handmade and dynamic – and maybe more antique, depending on the context and use. ***Good for:*** When Helvetica is too cold or perfect.

Compare to:

Rgatse

Neue Helvetica 55

Rgatse

Akzidenz-Grotesk

Neo-Grotesque Sans

112 Univers

114 Neue Helvetica

116 Akkurat

118 National

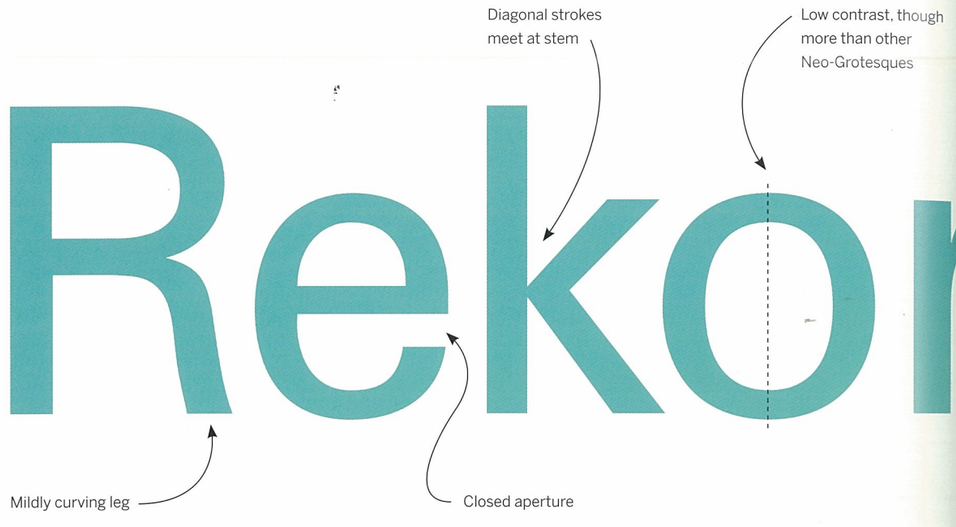
120 Antique Olive

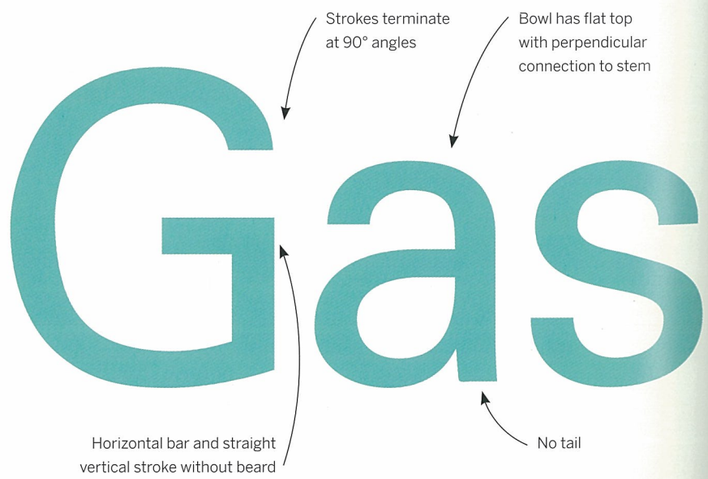
XXXxX

Background typefaces are Akkurat and National

Univers

Designer: Adrian Frutiger // **Foundry:** Deberny & Peignot, Linotype // **Country of origin:** France, Germany
Release year: 1957 // **Classification:** Neo-Grotesque Sans




Strokes terminate at 90° angles
Bowl has flat top with perpendicular connection to stem
Gas
Horizontal bar and straight vertical stroke without beard
No tail

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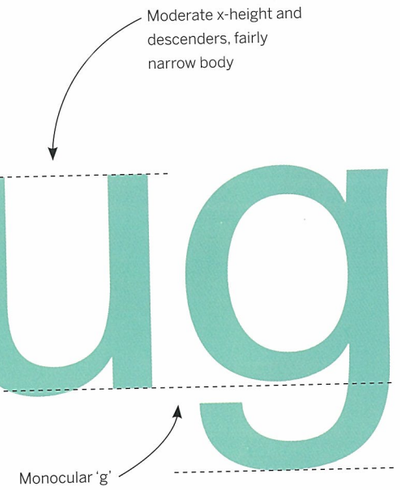
Univers 55 Roman



Released in the same year as Helvetica, Adrian Frutiger's masterpiece is the first multi-width, multi-weight superfamily designed as a consistent system from the beginning. The release was promoted by a multicoloured grid diagram that is still well-known and imitated today. To achieve the pioneering uniformity throughout the family, Frutiger created a core design that is quite spare, allowing for the extensive variations in weight and width. **Univers** is therefore a very neutral typeface, delivering readable text while drawing very little attention to itself. Univers Next is a modern reworking of the family that was initially optimised for photo, not digital typesetting. ***Good for:*** A clear, neutral vessel for unfettered communication.

Compare to:

Gaekys

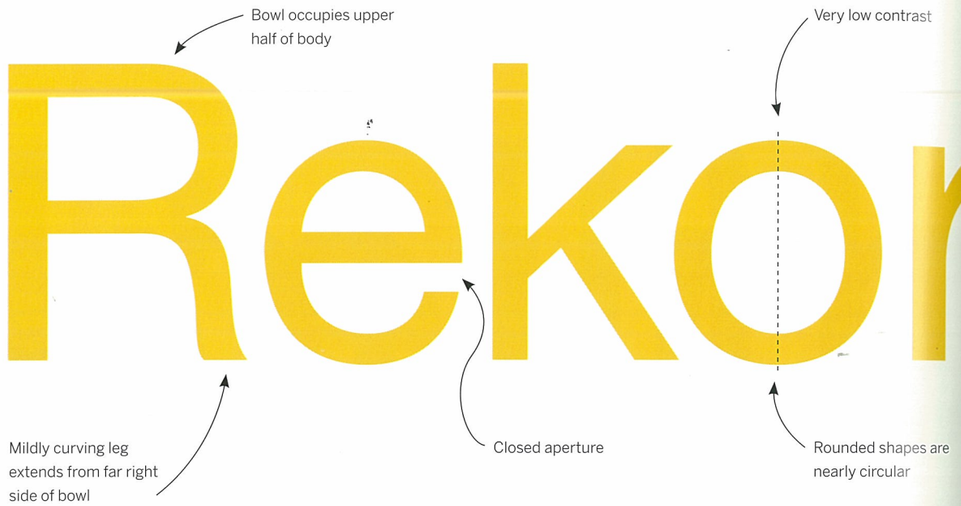
Helvetica Neue 55

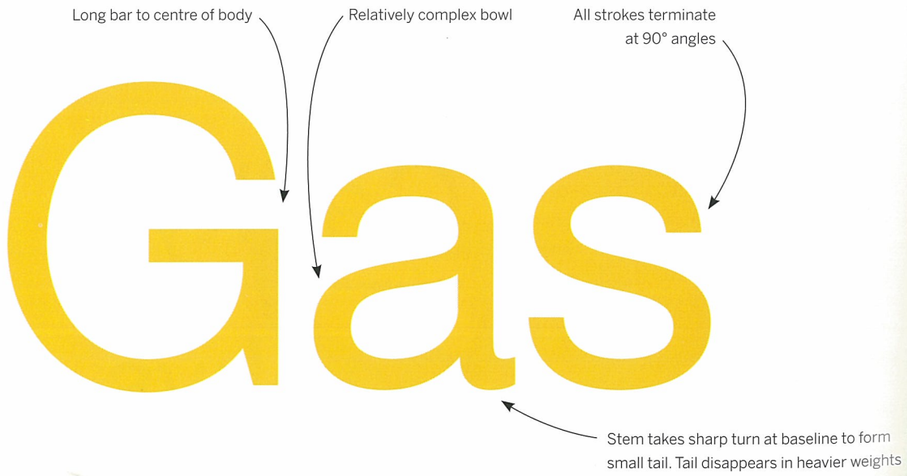
Gaekys

National

Neue Helvetica

Designer: (Max Miedinger, Eduard Hoffmann) Linotype staff // **Foundry:** (Haas) Linotype
Country of origin: (Switzerland) Germany // **Release year:** (1957) 1983 // **Classification:** Neo-Grotesque Sans


Bowl occupies upper half of body
Very low contrast
Rekord
Mildly curving leg extends from far right side of bowl
Closed aperture
Rounded shapes are nearly circular


Long bar to centre of body
Relatively complex bowl
All strokes terminate at 90° angles
Gas
Stem takes sharp turn at baseline to form small tail. Tail disappears in heavier weights

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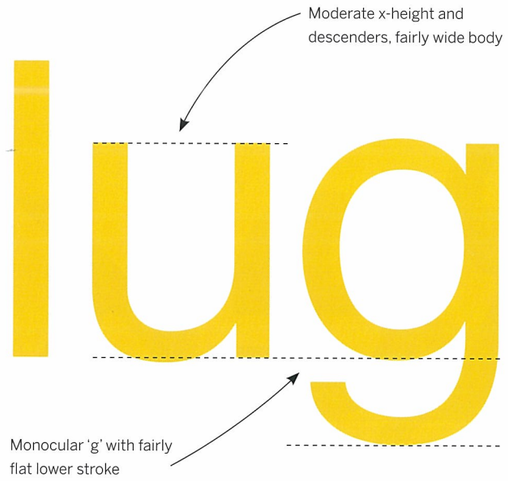
Neue Helvetica 55



More than fifty years since its release, Helvetica is the world's most widely known typeface. Its popularity is due in part to its attempt at idealised construction: contrast is minimal; strokes terminate at 90° angles; letter shapes and widths are unusually uniform, bucking conventional forms; and the overall texture is atypically even, almost homogenous. The result is useful for logos and graphic display type, where consistency is desired, but not as effective for long passages of text, where dynamic rhythm and unique lettershapes are vital. **Neue Helvetica** is a 1980s effort to harmonise the previously incompatible styles. Neue Haas Grotesk refers to the original drawings for an even more holistic family, unconstrained by various technological compromises.

Compare to:

Rgaslor

FF Bau

Rgaslor

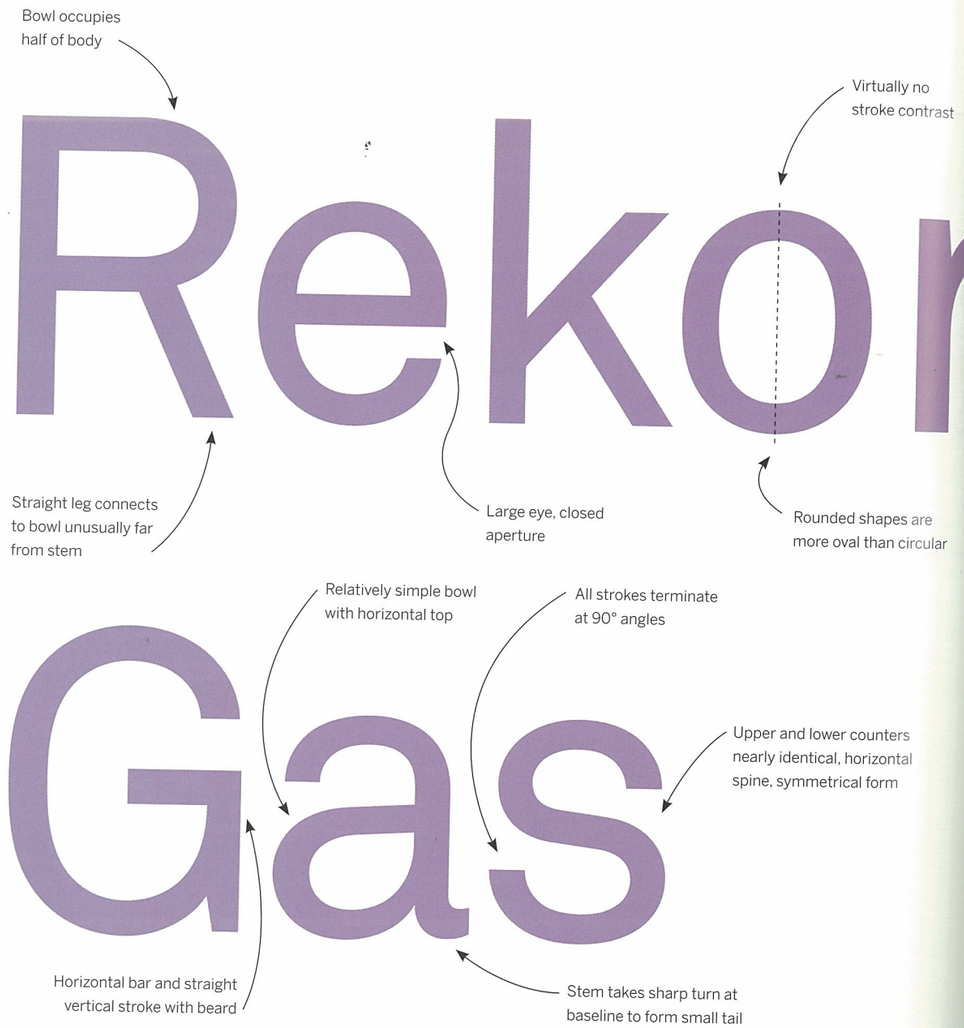
National

Rgaslor

Akkurat

Akkurat

Designer: Laurenz Brunner // **Foundry:** Lineto // **Country of origin:** Switzerland
Release year: 2004 // **Classification:** Neo-Grotesque Sans


Bowl occupies half of body
Virtually no stroke contrast
Rekord
Straight leg connects to bowl unusually far from stem
Large eye, closed aperture
Rounded shapes are more oval than circular
Relatively simple bowl with horizontal top
All strokes terminate at 90° angles
Gas
Upper and lower counters nearly identical, horizontal spine, symmetrical form
Horizontal bar and straight vertical stroke with beard
Stem takes sharp turn at baseline to form small tail

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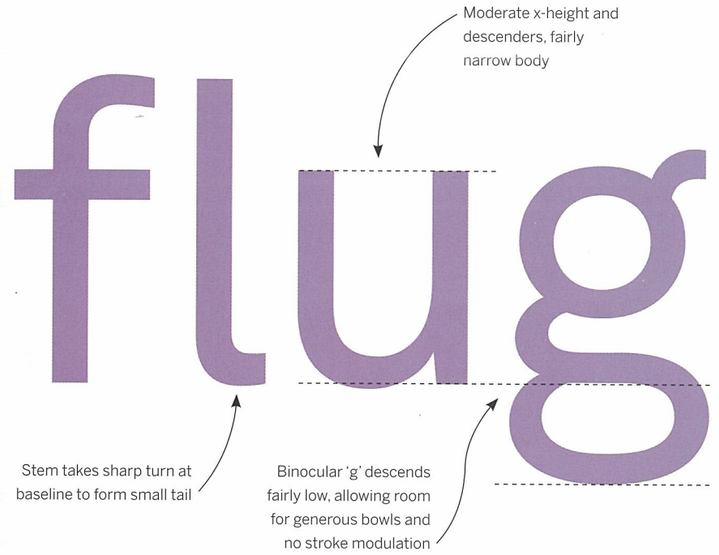
Akkurat Regular


Moderate x-height and descenders, fairly narrow body
flug
Stem takes sharp turn at baseline to form small tail
Binocular 'g' descends fairly low, allowing room for generous bowls and no stroke modulation

As uniform and static as Helvetica is, **Akkurat** attempts to take it a step further – and succeeds. This typeface, by Laurenz Brunner, is rooted in the Swiss tradition of pragmatic, rational design. Letters like the 'a' and 's' have middle strokes that are more horizontal, and thus more aligned. Stroke contrast is reduced. Forms are stiffer. In fact, Akkurat could be considered a Geometric sans serif, and would fit in that section if it didn't make sense to show it next to Helvetica given their similarities. A few characteristics give Akkurat its own place in the Neo-Grotesque category: a binocular 'g', tailed 'l', and a narrow overall width, resulting in oval-shaped rounds. ***Good for:*** Reflecting grid-based design concepts while remaining readable.

Compare to:

Rgaslor

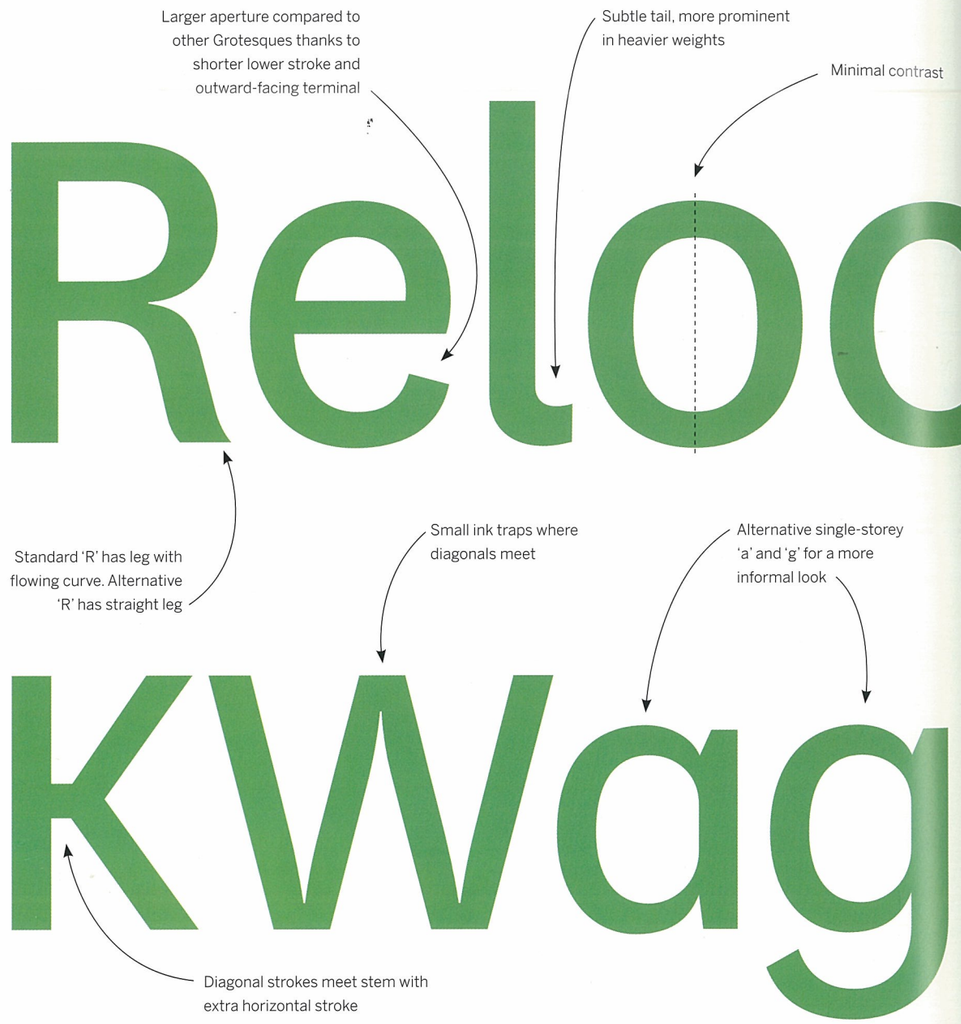
Neue Helvetica

Rgaslor

FF DIN

National

Designer: Kris Sowersby // **Foundry:** Klim // **Country of origin:** New Zealand
Release years: 2004–2009 // **Classification:** Neo-Grotesque Sans


Larger aperture compared to other Grotesques thanks to shorter lower stroke and outward-facing terminal
Subtle tail, more prominent in heavier weights
Minimal contrast
Relocating
Standard 'R' has leg with flowing curve. Alternative 'R' has straight leg
Small ink traps where diagonals meet
Alternative single-storey 'a' and 'g' for a more informal look
KWag
Diagonal strokes meet stem with extra horizontal stroke

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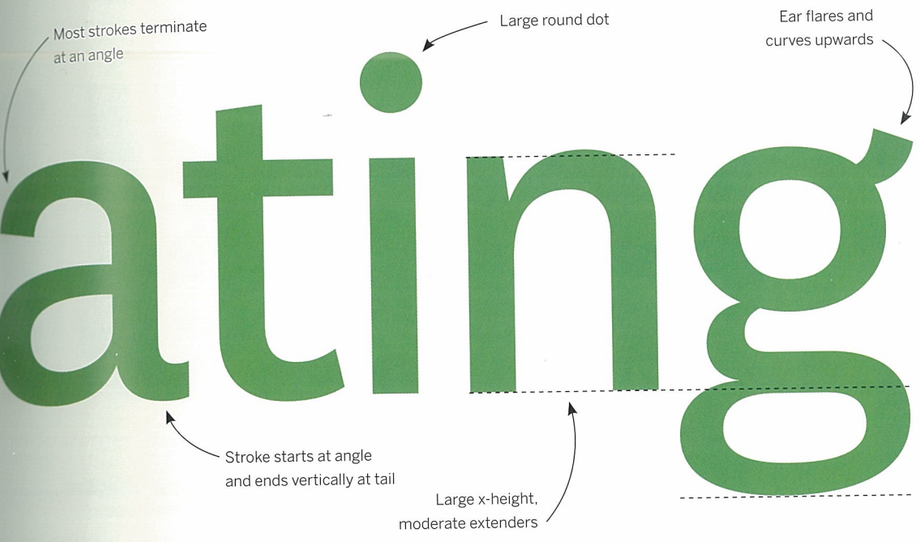
National Regular


Most strokes terminate at an angle
Large round dot
Ear flares and curves upwards
Stroke starts at angle and ends vertically at tail
Large x-height, moderate extenders

National is a Grotesque with Humanist qualities. While there is very little contrast, the strokes are somewhat calligraphic in structure, with angled terminals and very little uniformity. The overall affect is a warmer, contemporary Grot – more casual than **Univers** or **Neue Helvetica**, but more modern than **Bureau Grot** or **Knockout**. Like all of Kris Sowersby's work, National is fully equipped for professional typesetting, with all the language support, figure sets and even small caps to tackle a wide variety of text. ***Good for:*** Straightforward text with a subtle informality. Annual reports that don't put readers to sleep.

Compare to:

Ragtleij

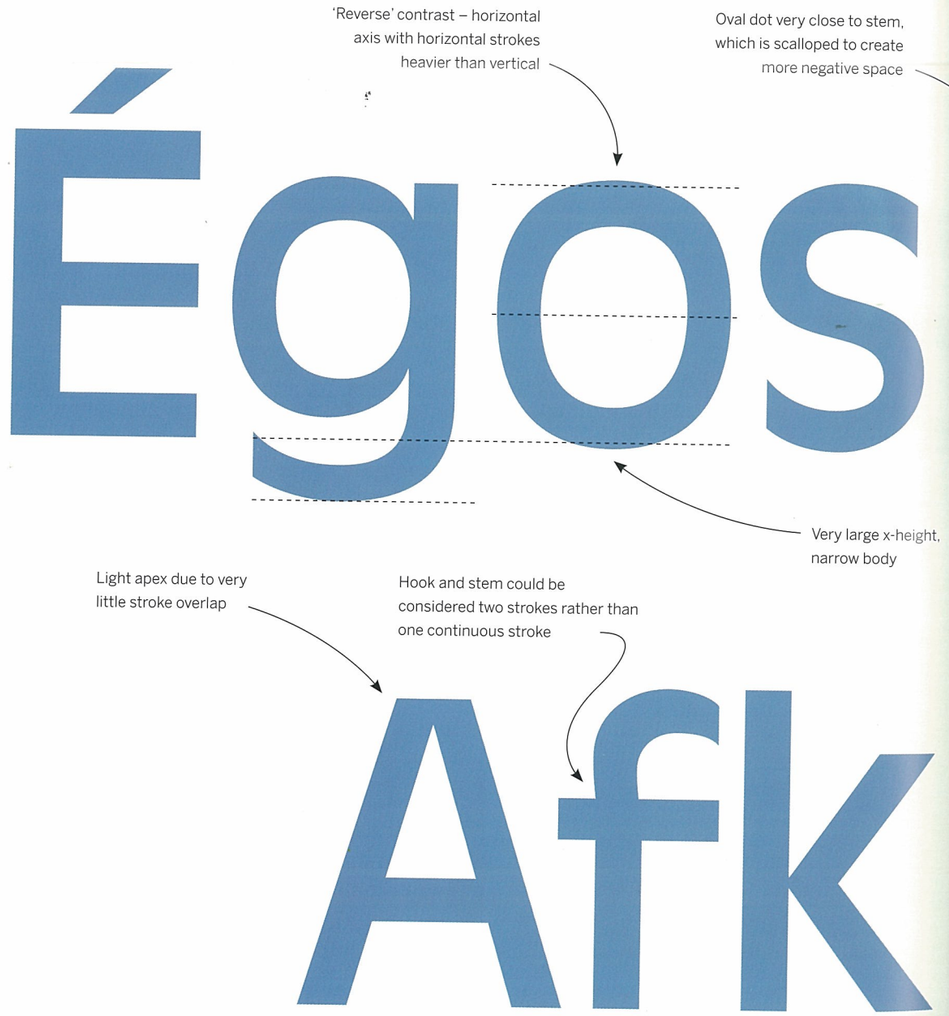
Neue Helvetica

Ragtleij

FF Bau

Antique Olive

Designer: Roger Excoffon // **Foundry:** (Fonderie Olive) Linotype // **Country of origin:** France
Release years: 1962–1966 // **Classification:** Neo-Grotesque/Geometric Sans


'Reverse' contrast – horizontal axis with horizontal strokes heavier than vertical
Oval dot very close to stem, which is scalloped to create more negative space
Égosillâtes
Very large x-height, narrow body
Light apex due to very little stroke overlap
Hook and stem could be considered two strokes rather than one continuous stroke
Afk

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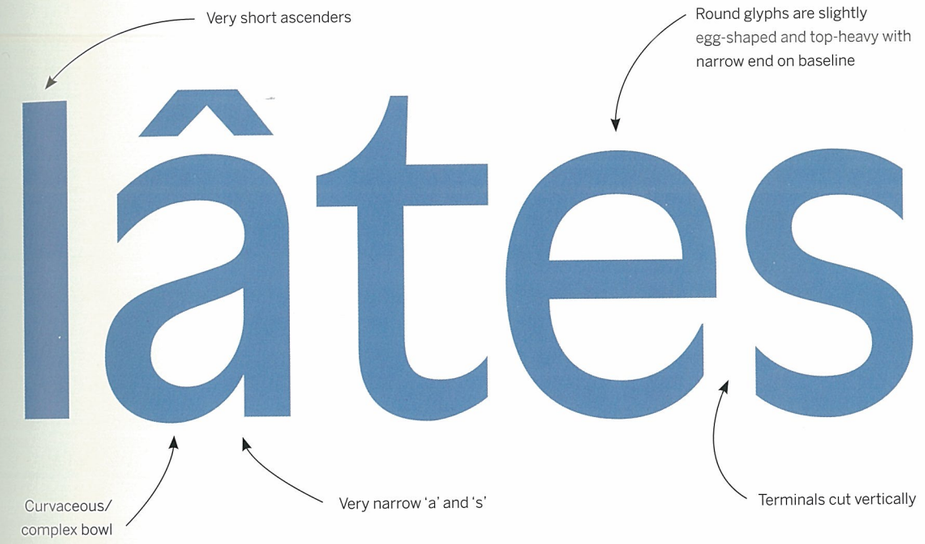
1234567890 ¼ ½ ¾ [âóüßç](.,:;?!$£&-*){ÉÓÜÇ}

Antique Olive Roman


Very short ascenders
Round glyphs are slightly egg-shaped and top-heavy with narrow end on baseline
Curvaceous/ complex bowl
Very narrow 'a' and 's'
Terminals cut vertically

Erik Spiekermann quips that German/Swiss type is like a pre-1990s Mercedes, Teutonic and utilitarian; and French type is like a Citroën 2CV, with sensual curves that value form over function. At first glance, **Antique Olive** certainly fits that analogy. Roger Excoffon's unusual creation defies categorisation. Its main peculiarity is in its horizontal axis – heavy top and bottom, light in the middle. Add the uniformly sheared terminals, the very large x-height and the oval rounds, and you get an odd but charming duck. Though the round shapes do look like olives, that's not how this face got its name. It was made for Fonderie Olive. 'Antique' was the French term for sans serif, not 'old'. Still, Antique Olive can feel dated. For a more contemporary option see **FF Balance**.

Compare to:

GRgoseat

FF Balance

Gothic Sans

124 **Bell Centennial**

126 News Gothic

128 Benton Sans

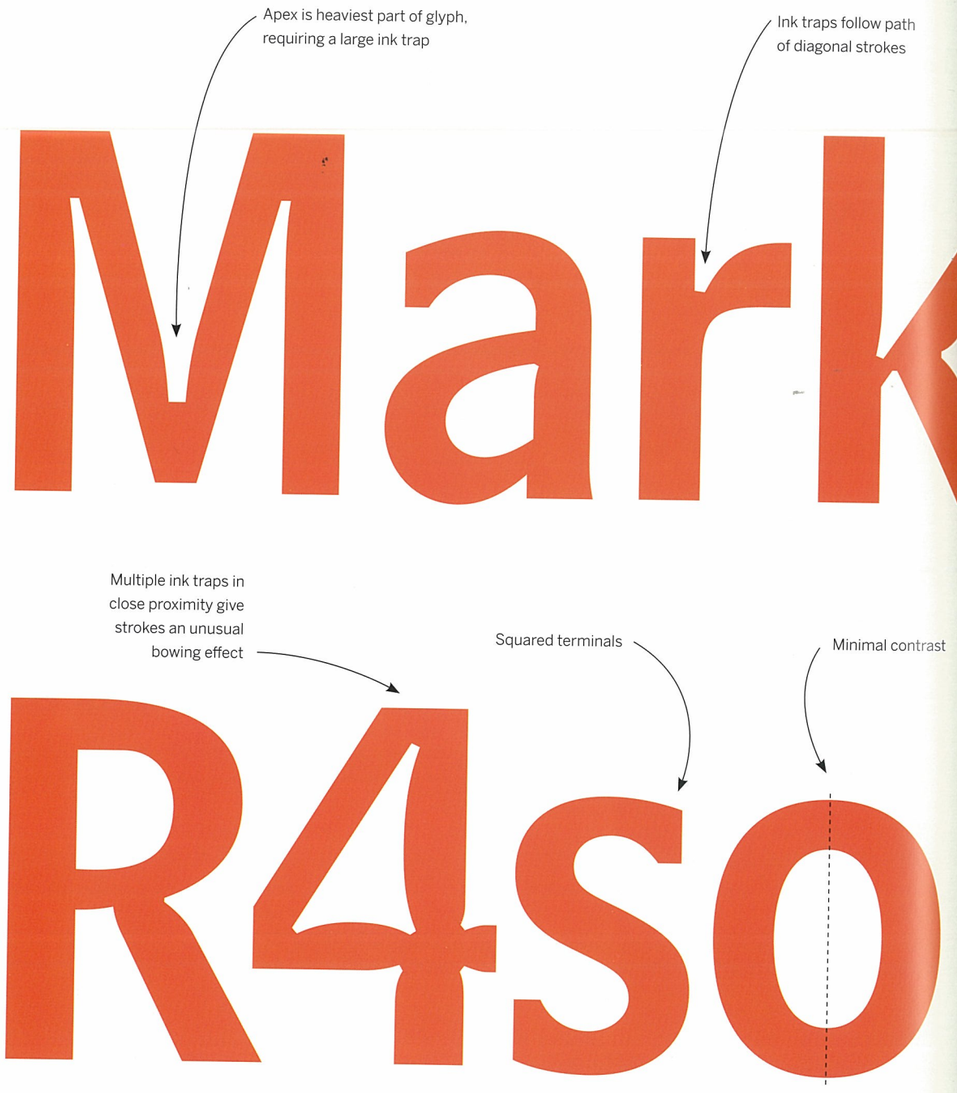
130 Whitney

XXXx

Background typefaces are Bell Centennial and Benton Sans

Bell Centennial

Designer: Matthew Carter // **Foundry:** Linotype, Adobe, Bitstream // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 1978 // **Classification:** Gothic Sans


Apex is heaviest part of glyph, requiring a large ink trap
Ink traps follow path of diagonal strokes
Marketing
Multiple ink traps in close proximity give strokes an unusual bowing effect
Squared terminals
Minimal contrast
R4so

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abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890
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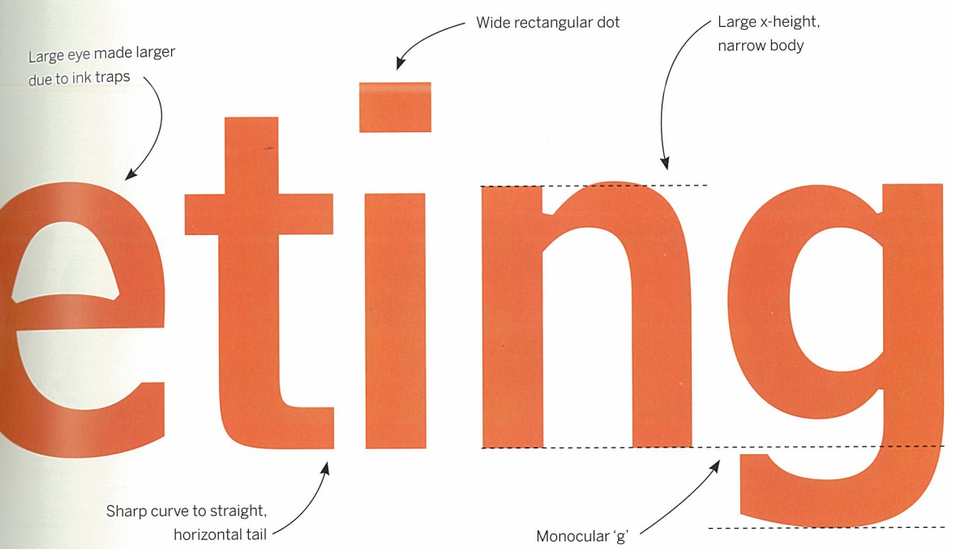
Bell Centennial Name & Number


Large eye made larger due to ink traps
Wide rectangular dot
Large x-height, narrow body
Marketing
Sharp curve to straight, horizontal tail
Monocular 'g'

Bell Centennial's bizarre '4' and 'M' are a perfect lesson in type made specifically for its intended medium. In this case, the platform was telephone books. In 1974, AT&T asked Matthew Carter to replace their previous typeface, Bell Gothic, with something that could save costs by fitting more lines per page. To keep the type legible at tiny sizes on cheap paper, Carter made extensive use of a compensation technique called 'ink trapping'. This reduces the amount of ink-spread that distorts letters by filling junctions and counters.
So, what looks strange, even ugly, at large sizes, actually takes its proper form on the pulpy pages of a directory. Many capitalise on Bell Centennial's curiosity to set eye-catching headlines.

Compare to:

NVAsgakei

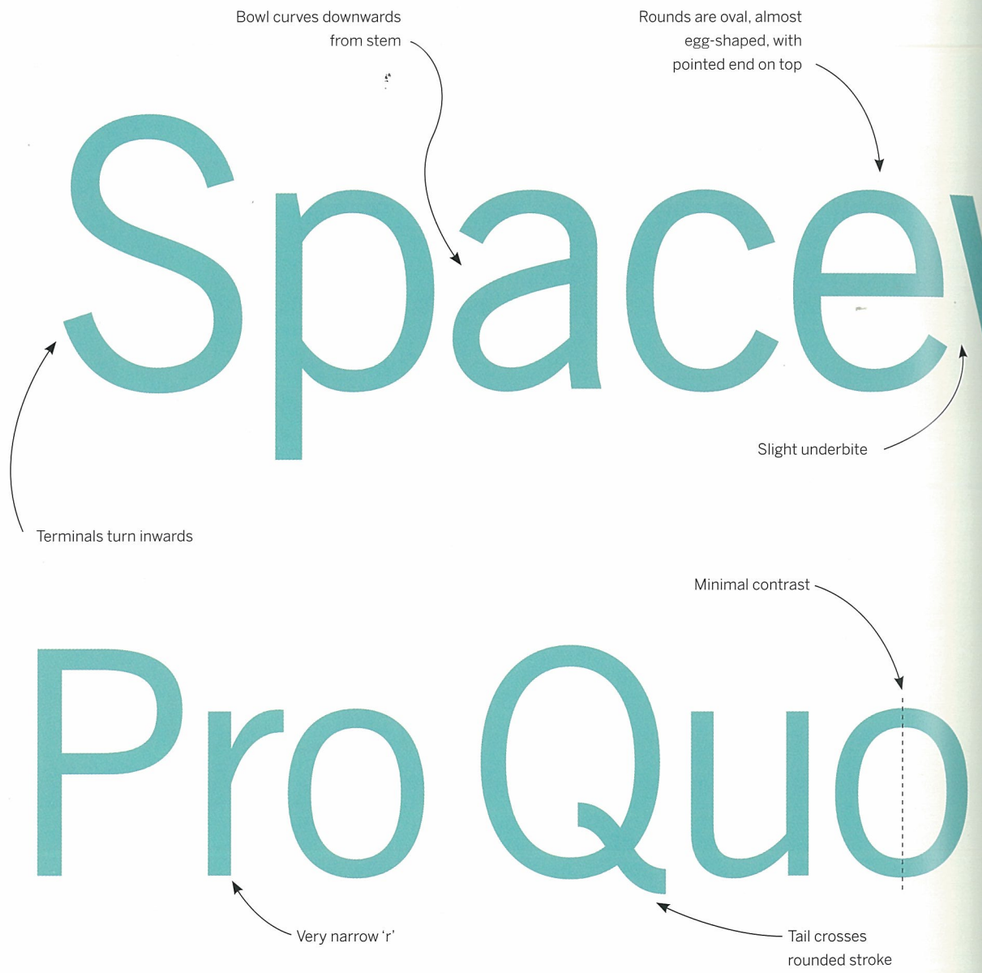
Amplitude

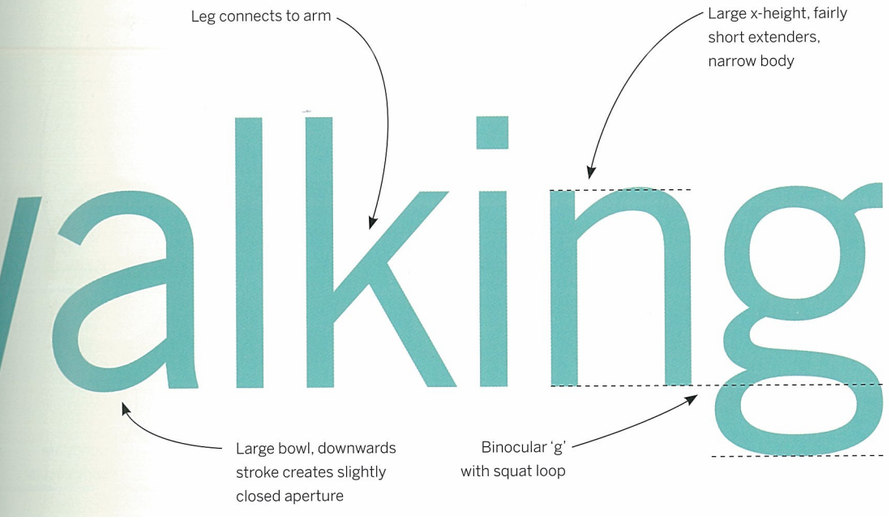
NVAsgakei

News Gothic

News Gothic

Designer: (Morris Fuller Benton) Bitstream staff // **Foundry:** (American Type Founders) Bitstream
Country of origin: United States // **Release year:** (1908) 1958 // **Classification:** Gothic Sans




Leg connects to arm
Large x-height, fairly short extenders, narrow body
walking
Large bowl, downwards stroke creates slightly closed aperture
Binocular 'g' with squat loop

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abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890

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News Gothic BT Roman

In many ways, this is the archetypal American sans serif. Designed by the prolific Morris Fuller Benton in 1908, **News Gothic** (and its Linotype follower, Trade Gothic) became the most popular sans in the States for several decades. Designers growing tired of traditional type were drawn to its clean, sensible demeanour and the versatility of its compact, monolinear structure. Benton only designed a few weights for News Gothic; other compatible styles were added later, some with different typeface names. The digital version shown here is Bitstream's, which modernises some of the characters and gathers all the disparate styles into a more consistent family. Benton Sans performs a similar service with an even wider range.
Good for: A perennial no-nonsense workhorse.

Compare to:

agekyjs

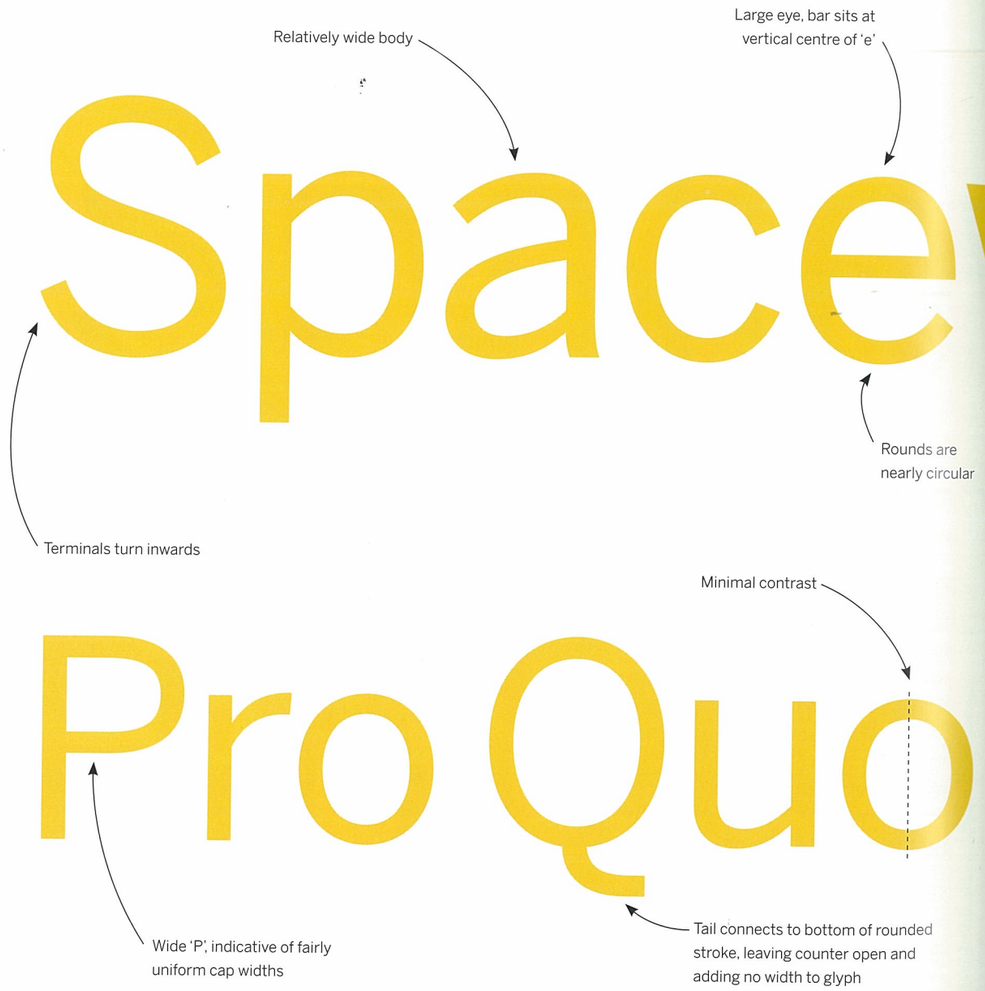
Benton Sans

agekyjs

Whitney

Benton Sans

Designer: (Morris Fuller Benton) Tobias Frere-Jones, Cyrus Highsmith // **Foundry:** (American Type Founders) Font Bureau
Country of origin: United States // **Release years:** (1908) 1995–2008 // **Classification:** Gothic Sans


Relatively wide body
Large eye, bar sits at vertical centre of 'e'
Spacewalking
Rounds are nearly circular
Terminals turn inwards
Minimal contrast
Pro Quo
Wide 'P', indicative of fairly uniform cap widths
Tail connects to bottom of rounded stroke, leaving counter open and adding no width to glyph

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abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890
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Benton Sans Regular

Outwards stroke opens aperture
Leg connects to arm
Large x-height, short extenders
Bowl curves down from stem
Binocular 'g', lower bowl quite squat due to body width and short descenders

Benton Sans is a welcome update to Morris Fuller Benton's News Gothic. At first glance it's clear that the new face owes a lot to its forefather, but there are some major advancements that bring Benton's classic into the 21st century. The regular width is slightly wider, allowing it to set paragraphs of text at a smaller size. Terminals point outwards, opening apertures and further improving readability. But the most important enhancement is the breadth of the family: eight weights in each of four widths. This large set of options is typical of Font Bureau's offerings – megafamilies made for the demands of publication design. ***Good for:*** Sturdy, plain type for complex typographic hierarchies.

Compare to:

agekyjs

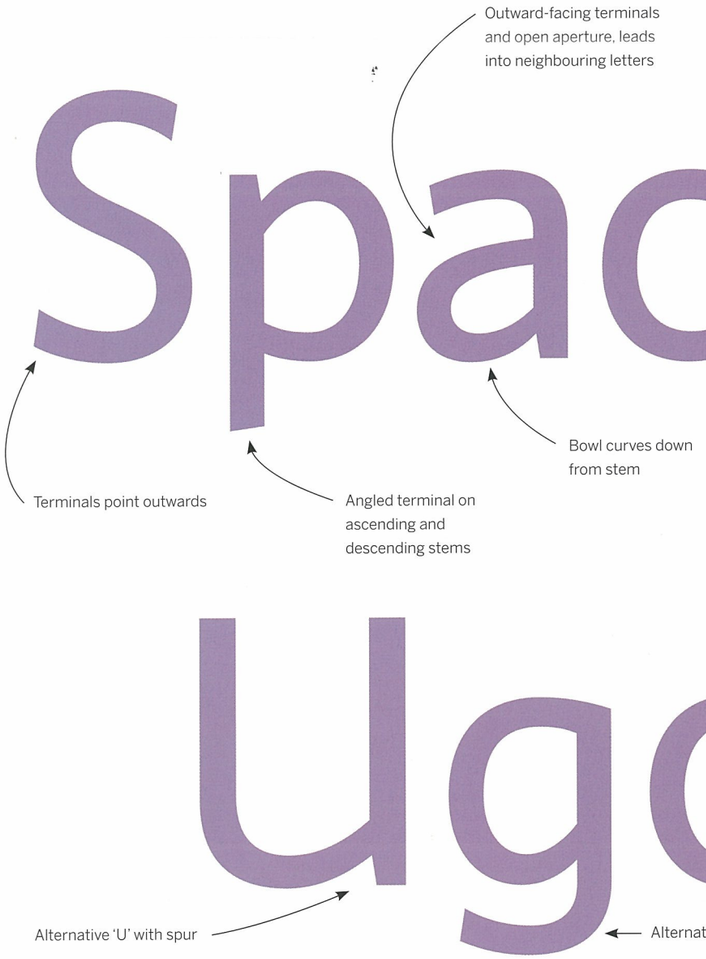
News Gothic BT

agekyjs

Whitney

Whitney

Designer: H&FJ staff // **Foundry:** Hoefler & Frere-Jones // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 2004 // **Classification:** Gothic Sans



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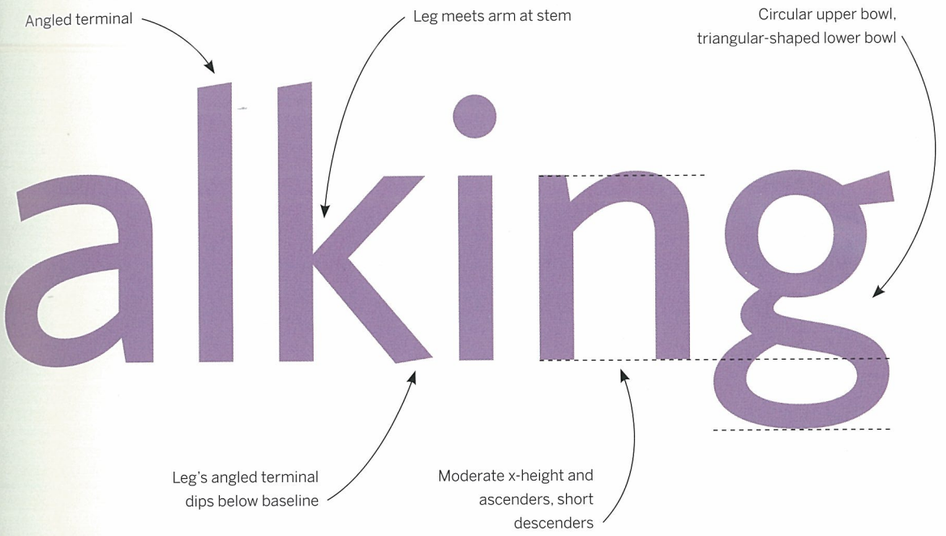
Whitney Medium


Angled terminal
Leg meets arm at stem
Circular upper bowl, triangular-shaped lower bowl
Spacewalking
Leg's angled terminal dips below baseline
Moderate x-height and ascenders, short descenders

As a base, **Whitney** is a Gothic – doing much of what **Benton Sans** does for **News Gothic** – only it takes the style a big step further into Humanist territory, evolving into a more expressive sans serif that combines the best of the two categories. The apertures are very open and stems have a diagonal cut at their ends, adding to the contemporary feel. A bevy of alternative forms lend even more versatility, allowing the user to tone down the personality by swapping out the angled terminals. Whitney is not only a great Text face, it's also tuned for wayfinding systems, with a compact design that is still clear from a distance. There is also a very complete set of figures as well as circled and squared 'index' numbers to aid in infographics.

Compare to:

rstikfg

News Gothic BT

rstikfg

Benton Sans

Geometric Sans

134 Futura ND

136 Avenir

138 Gotham

140 ITC Avant Garde Gothic

142 Calibre/Metric

144 FF DIN

146 Interstate

148 Verlag

150 Klavika

152 MVB Solano Gothic

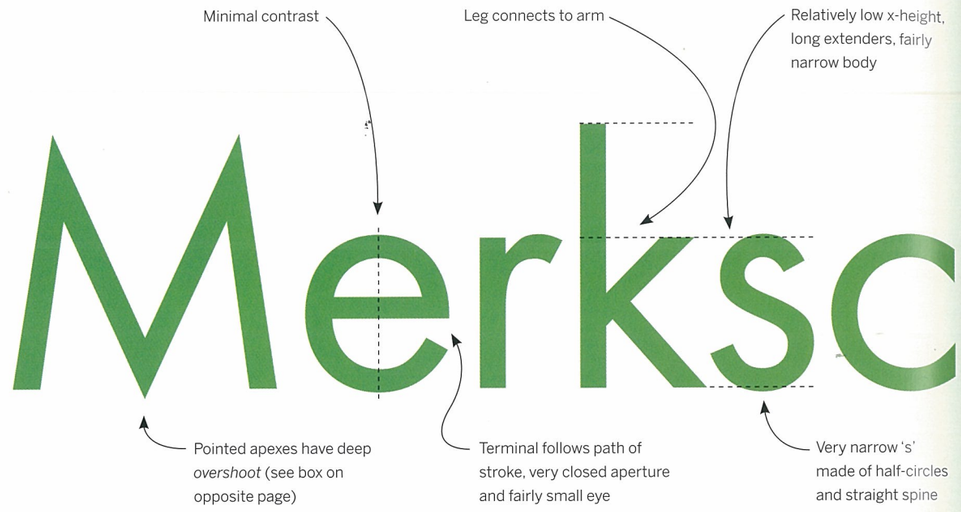
154 Forza

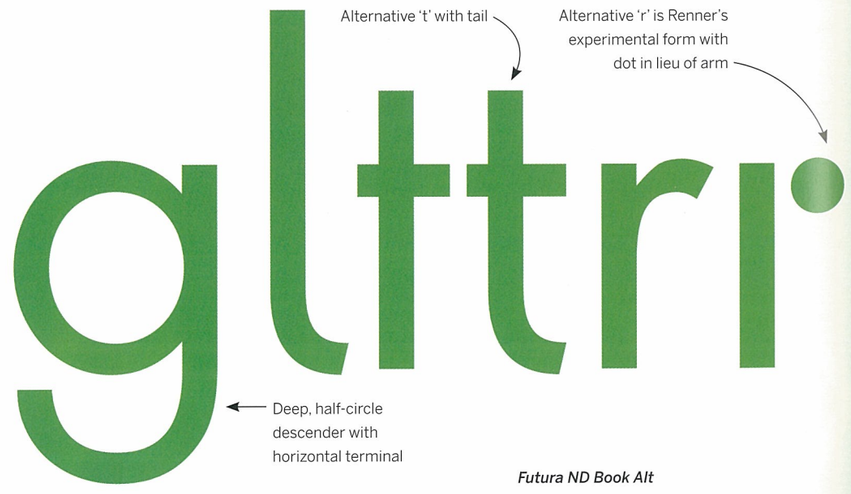
XXXXXXXXXXXX

Background typefaces are ITC Avant Garde Gothic and MVB Solano Gothic

Futura ND

Designer: (Paul Renner) Marie-Therésè Koreman // **Foundry:** (Bauer Type Foundry) Neufville //
Country of origin: (Germany) Spain // **Release years:** (1927) 1999–2012 // **Classification:** Geometric Sans


Minimal contrast
Leg connects to arm
Relatively low x-height, long extenders, fairly narrow body
Merkschwäche
Pointed apexes have deep *overshoot* (see box on opposite page)
Terminal follows path of stroke, very closed aperture and fairly small eye
Very narrow 's' made of half-circles and straight spine


Alternative 't' with tail
Alternative 'r' is Renner's experimental form with dot in lieu of arm
gttri
Deep, half-circle descender with horizontal terminal

Futura ND Book Alt

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890 163
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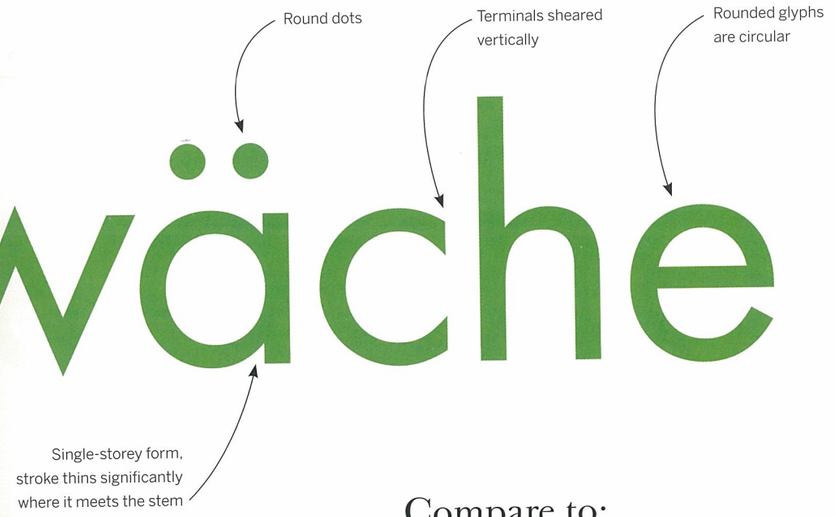
Futura ND Book


Round dots
Terminals sheared vertically
Rounded glyphs are circular
Single-storey form, stroke thins significantly where it meets the stem

Futura has become widely known as the prototypical Geometric typeface. Bauhaus experiments in geometric form led Paul Renner to develop a typeface that was initially made entirely of straight lines and circular shapes. This was eventually tamed into more conventional letterforms, but they remained mostly Geometric. Futura's capitals are based on classical proportions, explaining their variable widths. There are countless digital versions, but **Futura ND** comes directly from original sources, and the latest release includes alternatives previously unavailable. Caution: the protrusion of pointed apexes ('M', 'N', 'w') is called 'overshoot', an optical compensation for type intended for Text sizes, but potentially distracting when large.

Compare to:

Rtaeopsy

Avenir 55

Rtaeopsy

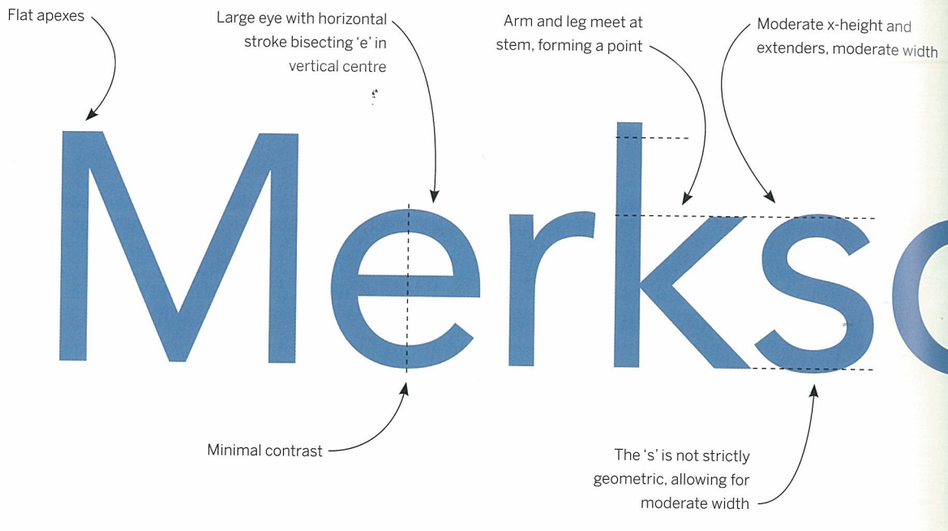
Gotham

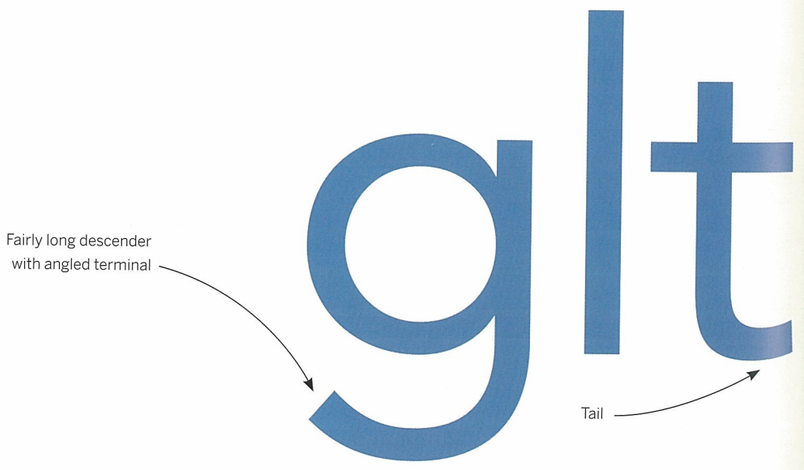
Rtaeopsy

Verlag

Avenir

Designer: Adrian Frutiger // **Foundry:** Linotype, Germany // **Country of origin:** France, Germany
Release year: 1988 // **Classification:** Geometric Sans


Flat apexes
Large eye with horizontal stroke bisecting 'e' in vertical centre
Arm and leg meet at stem, forming a point
Moderate x-height and extenders, moderate width
Merkschwäche
Minimal contrast
The 's' is not strictly geometric, allowing for moderate width



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abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890
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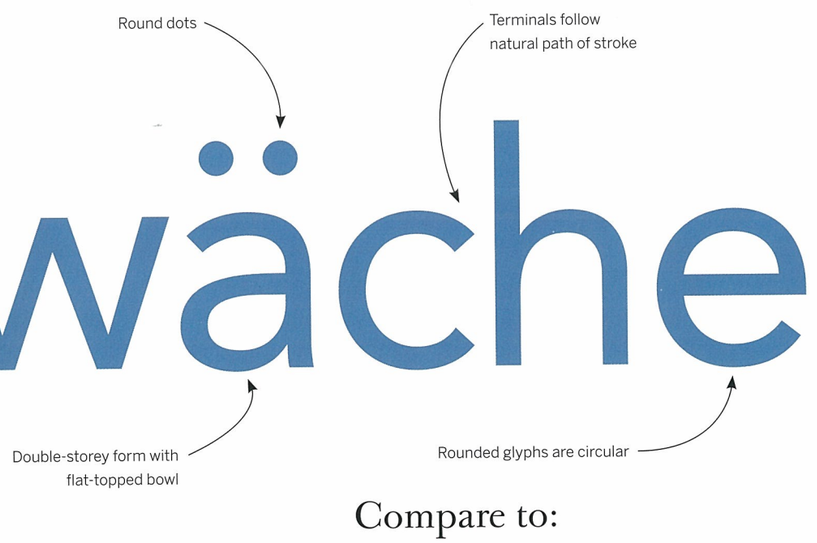
Avenir 55 Roman


Round dots
Terminals follow natural path of stroke
Double-storey form with flat-topped bowl
Rounded glyphs are circular

'Right from the beginning, I was convinced that **Avenir** is the better Futura', said a confident Adrian Frutiger in a recent interview looking back at his 1988 creation. In some respects, his declaration was more than mere boasting – coming sixty years after Futura, Avenir remedied many of the compromises that Renner made in his quest for geometry. Frutiger abandoned pure circles and strictly even stroke weight for 'corrected' curves and a bit of contrast. Letter widths are more regular, the x-height is larger and a double-storey 'a' replaces the less legible single-storey one. Avenir retains the simplicity and clarity of a Geometric sans serif; it just does it more gracefully, sacrificing graphical purity for readability. ***Good for:*** Comfortable geometric type.

Compare to:

Rtaeopsy

Futura ND

Rtaeopsy

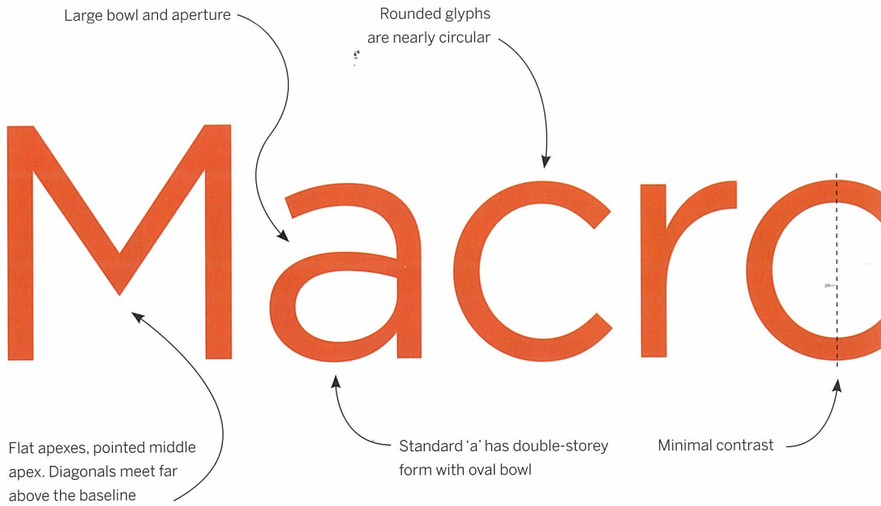
Gotham

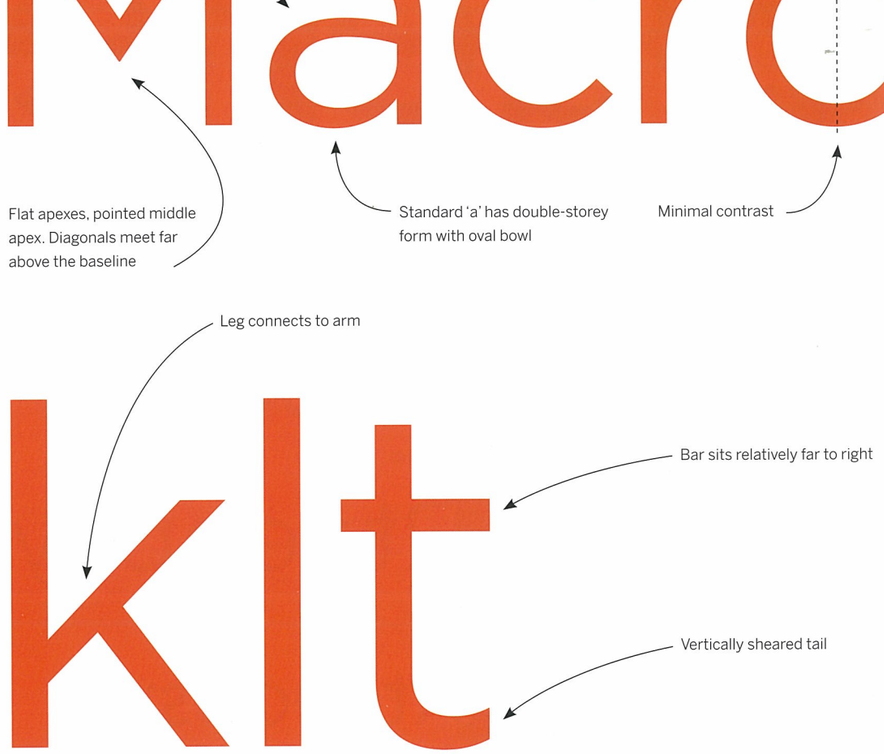
Rtaeopsy

Verlag

Gotham

Designer: Tobias Frere-Jones // **Foundry:** Hoefler & Frere-Jones // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 2000 // **Classification:** Geometric Sans


Large bowl and aperture
Rounded glyphs are nearly circular
Flat apexes, pointed middle apex. Diagonals meet far above the baseline
Standard 'a' has double-storey form with oval bowl
Minimal contrast



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abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890
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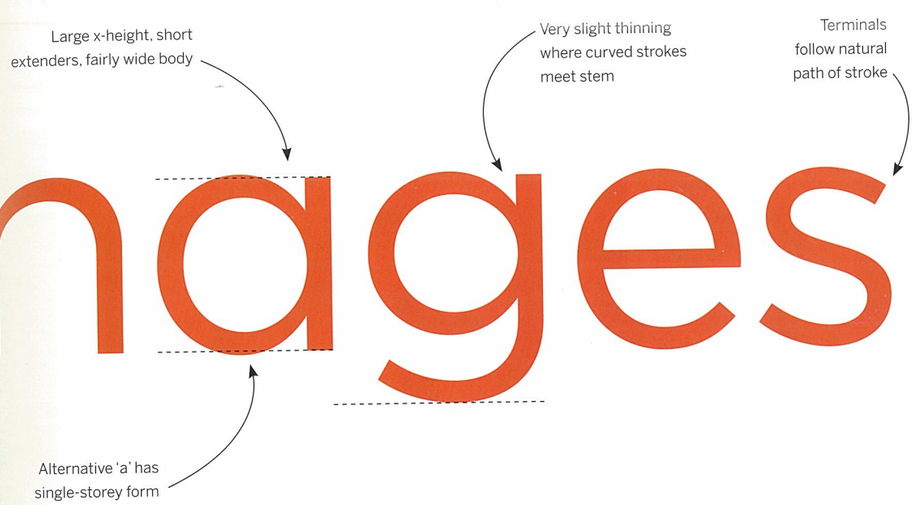
Gotham Book


Large x-height, short extenders, fairly wide body
Very slight thinning where curved strokes meet stem
Terminals follow natural path of stroke
Alternative 'a' has single-storey form

One can't really describe this Hoefler & Frere-Jones creation better than H&FJ themselves: '**Gotham**. What letters look like'. The typeface is simply self-evident. Each character just feels 'normal' and 'right'. Inspired by mid-century architectural lettering of New York City, Gotham celebrates the alphabet's most basic form. These qualities made Gotham the most popular release of recent years. It's used everywhere, in logos, in magazines, in the very things that inspired it: signs. Gotham's simplicity is not merely geometric – like **Avenir**, it feels more natural than mechanical. In fact, its lowercase shares a lot with Avenir's, despite being much larger. But Gotham's essence is in the caps: broad, sturdy 'block' letters of very consistent width.

Compare to:

Matoeg

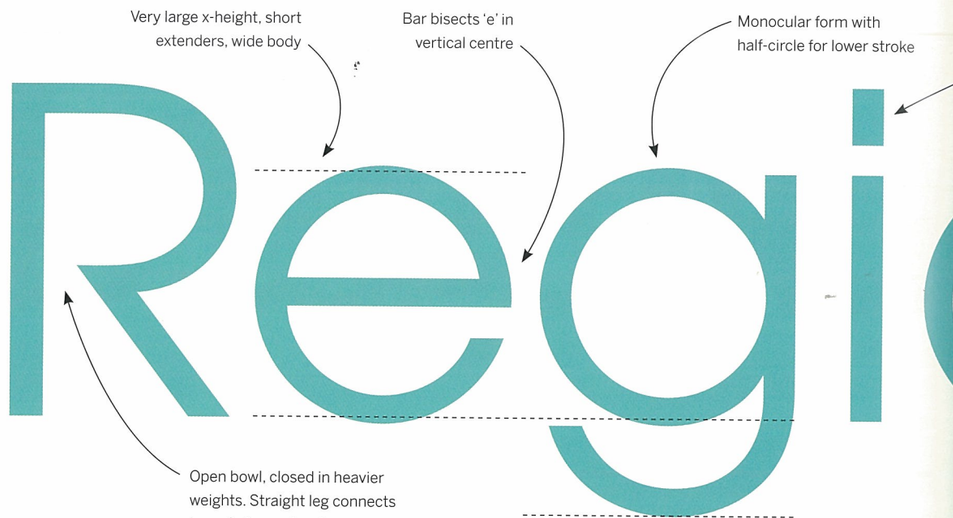
Avenir 55

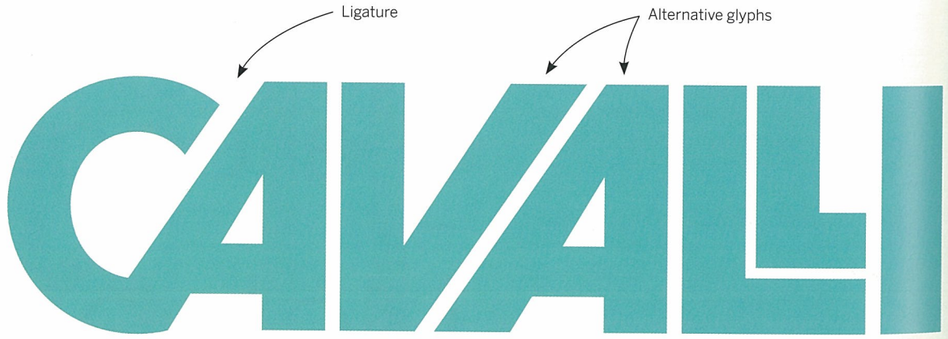
Matoeg

ITC Avant Garde Gothic

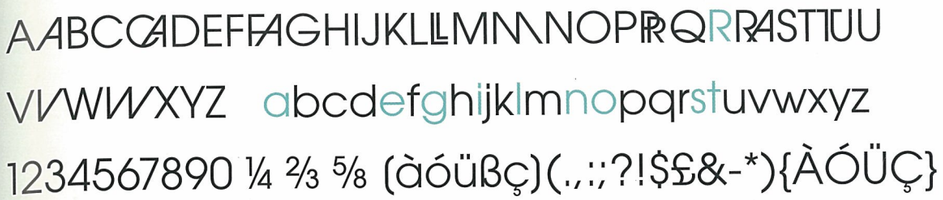
ITC Avant Garde Gothic

Designer: Herb Lubalin, Tom Carnase // **Foundry:** ITC // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 1970 // **Classification:** Geometric Sans

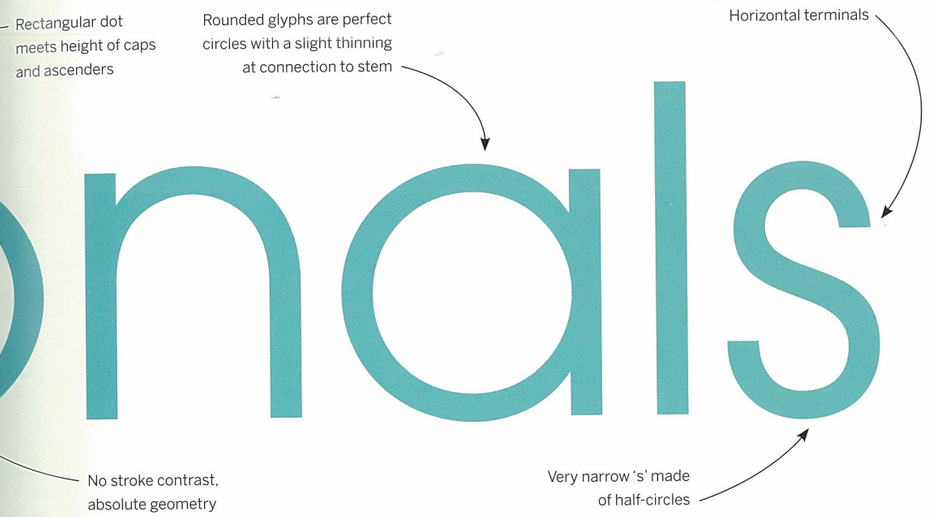

Very large x-height, short extenders, wide body
Bar bisects 'e' in vertical centre
Monocular form with half-circle for lower stroke
Regionals
Open bowl, closed in heavier weights. Straight leg connects to end of open bowl



ITC Avant Garde Gothic Bold



ITC Avant Garde Gothic Book


Rectangular dot meets height of caps and ascenders
Rounded glyphs are perfect circles with a slight thinning at connection to stem
Horizontal terminals
Regionals
No stroke contrast, absolute geometry
Very narrow 's' made of half-circles

ITC **Avant Garde Gothic** was a response to popular demand for the type in the logo of *Avant Garde*, a groundbreaking magazine of the 1960s. The logo, designed by Herb Lubalin, was lettered by Tom Carnase. From it the two created a typeface for use in the magazine only. Later it became ITC's first offering. Key traits are a large x-height, strict geometry and the infamous leaning letters and ligatures that allow extra tight fitting words. These glyphs are often abused, leading Ed Benguiat to famously declare, 'The only place Avant Garde looks good is in the words "Avant Garde"'. There are a few digital versions of the typeface. The ITC Pro fonts have many of the alts and ligs, but with merely slanted obliques instead of corrected ones.

Compare to:

Rsotae

Gotham

Rsotae

Futura ND

Calibre/Metric

Designer: Kris Sowersby // **Foundry:** Klim // **Country of origin:** New Zealand
Release year: 2011 // **Classification:** Geometric Sans

Horizontal terminals, smaller apertures
Tail with vertical terminal
Large, oval bowl
Conventional *eszett* form, sometimes misread by non-Germans as a 'B'
Calibre Regular
Diagonal strokes meet at baseline
Leg connects to arm
Diagonal strokes meet above baseline with pointed apex
Arm and leg meet at stem
Flat sided 'G'
Calibre Regular
Metric Regular

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890

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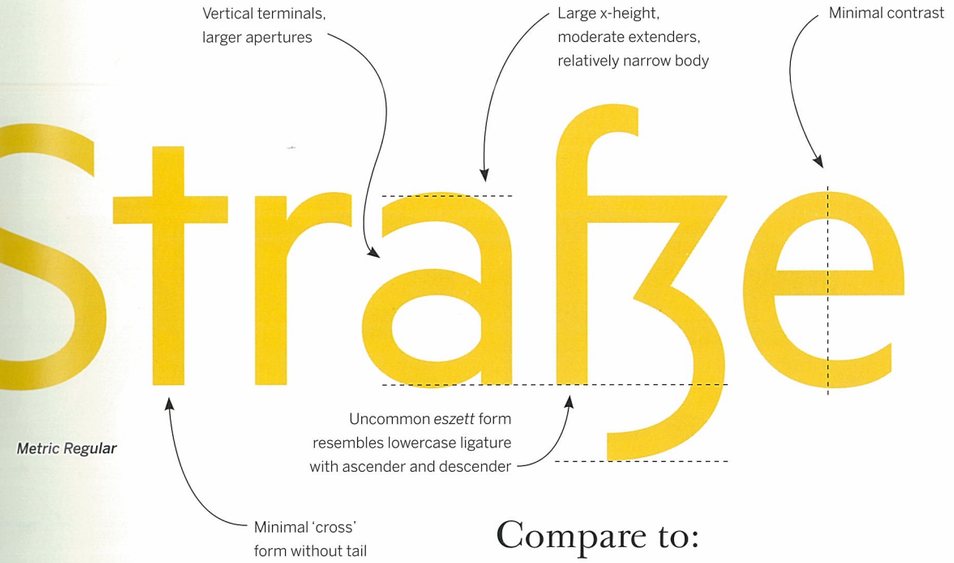
Metric Regular


Vertical terminals, larger apertures
Large x-height, moderate extenders, relatively narrow body
Minimal contrast
Uncommon *eszett* form resembles lowercase ligature with ascender and descender
Minimal 'cross' form without tail
Metric Regular

Metric is a loose interpretation of the West Berlin road signs that impressed designer Kris Sowersby on a visit in 2010. It tempers the strict geometry of the original alphabets but retains the charm of letters designed by engineers. Most terminals are vertical, the 't' is a simple cross and the 'a' has an oval belly. **Calibre** retains the basic structure of Metric but extends many of the strokes so that they curve around to terminate horizontally, parallel with the baseline. This puts Calibre closer to Neo-Grotesque territory. Though published separately, the fonts can be used interchangeably. ***Good for:*** A fresh, yet still Rational, alternative to **Futura** or Helvetica.

Compare to:

GMKalgies

Interstate

GMKalgies

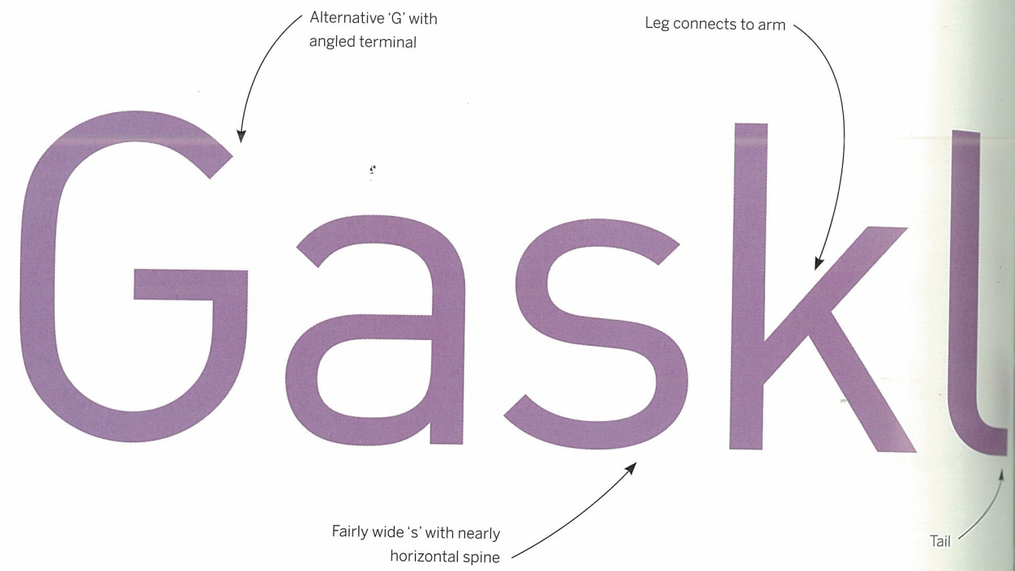
FF DIN

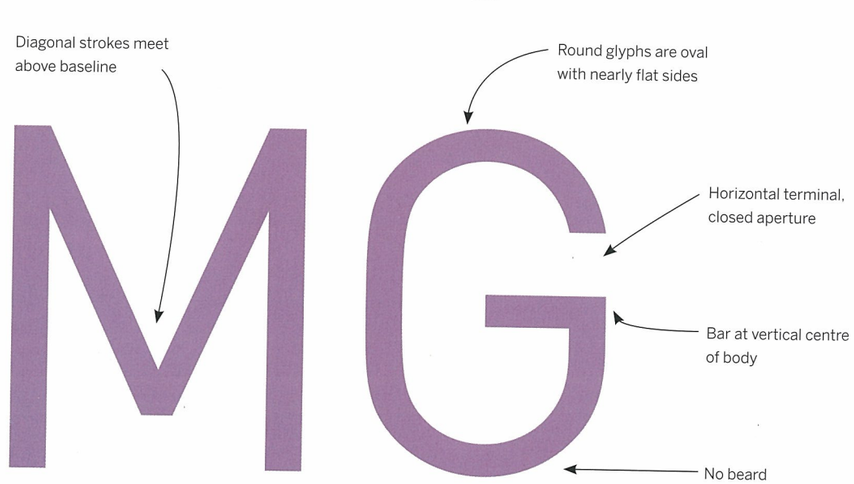
GMKalgies

Verlag

FF DIN

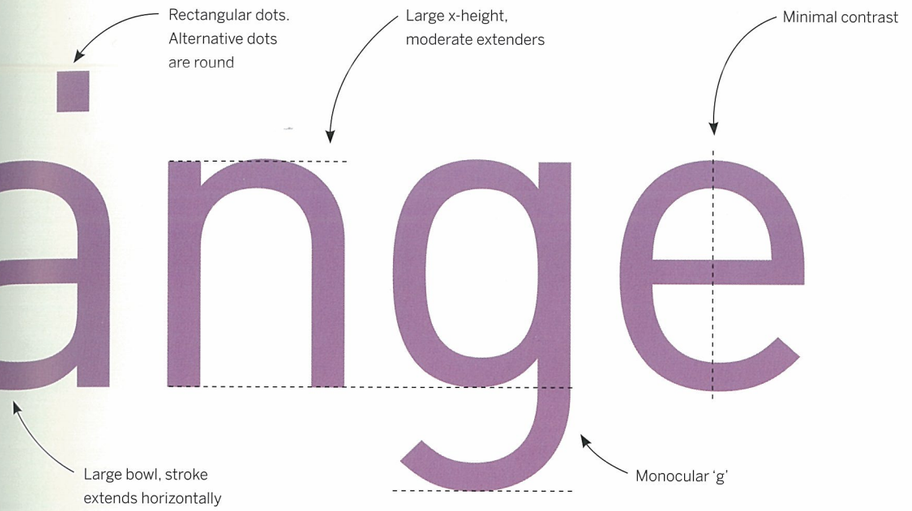
Designer: Albert-Jan Pool // **Foundry:** FontFont // **Country of origin:** Germany
Release year: 1995 // **Classification:** Geometric Sans




Diagonal strokes meet above baseline
Round glyphs are oval with nearly flat sides
MG
Horizontal terminal, closed aperture
Bar at vertical centre of body
No beard

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz ÆæŒœ 12345
67890 163 ¼ ½ ¾ [äóüßç](.,:;?!$£&-*){ÀÓÜÇ}

FF DIN Regular



DIN is essentially the national typeface of Germany. Developed over many years by the German Institute for Standardisation (Deutsches Institut für Normung) for traffic signs and other official applications, DIN is an unusually successful design by committee. Its spare, geometric construction effectively communicates without artifice or distraction. But the institute's DIN 1451 was essentially drawn by engineers and lacked the subtleties of a type designer's expertise. For **FF DIN** Albert-Jan Pool took the challenge, easing some of the typeface's harsh geometry and expanding the simple two-width family into many more weights with all the requirements for professional digital typesetting.
Good for: Mechanical simplicity with a Teutonic touch.

Compare to:

Isagek GM

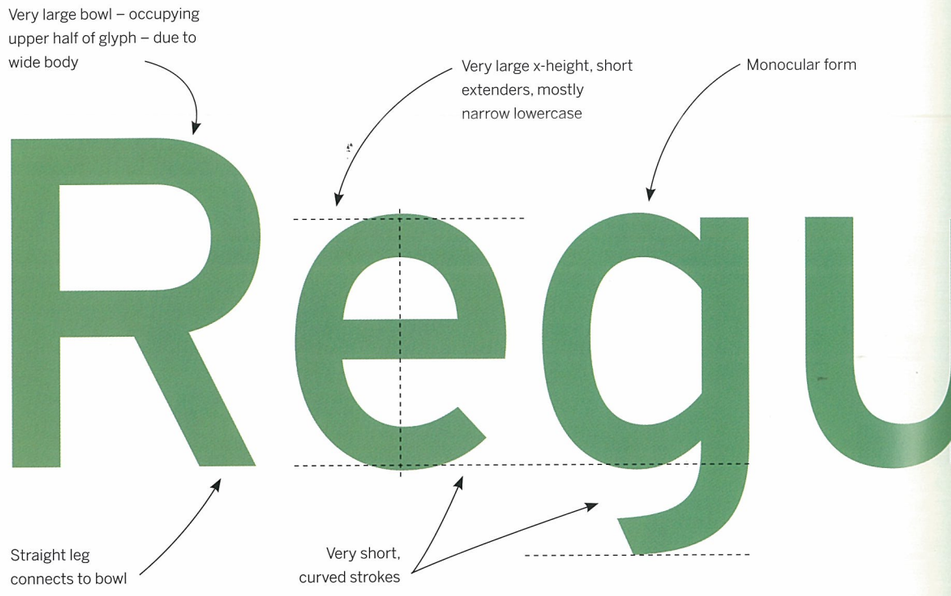
Heron Sans

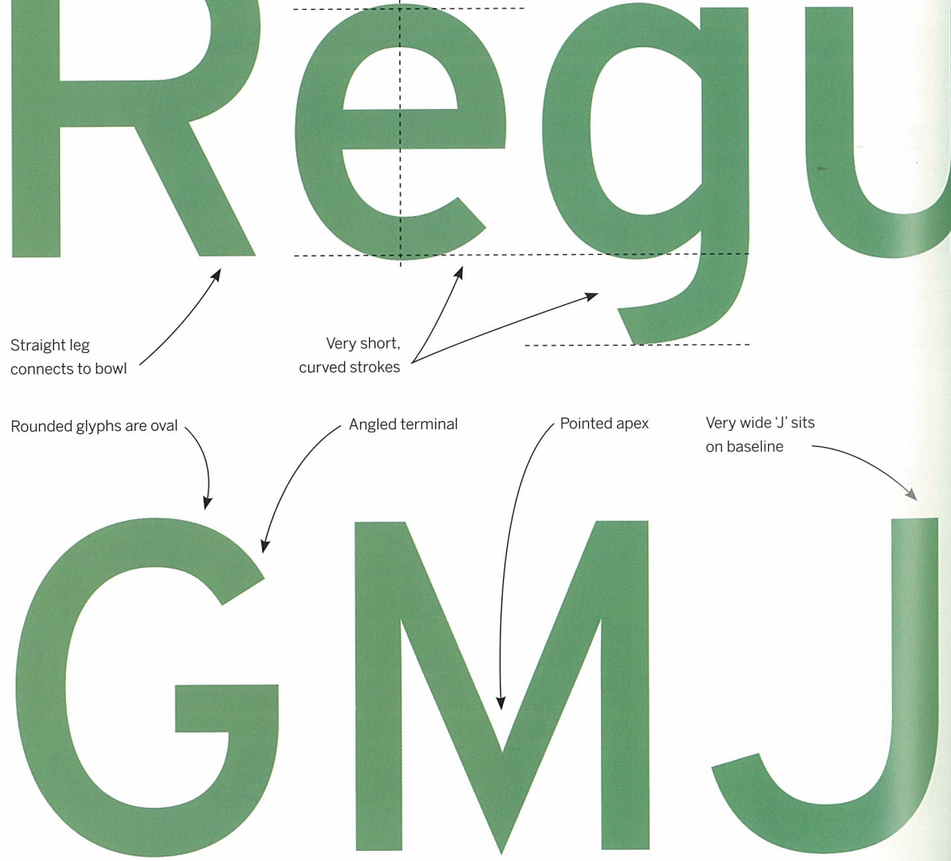
Isagek GM

Akkurat

Interstate

Designer: Tobias Frere-Jones // **Foundry:** Font Bureau // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 1993 // **Classification:** Geometric Sans


Very large bowl – occupying upper half of glyph – due to wide body
Very large x-height, short extenders, mostly narrow lowercase
Monocular form
Straight leg connects to bowl
Very short, curved strokes
Regularity



ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890
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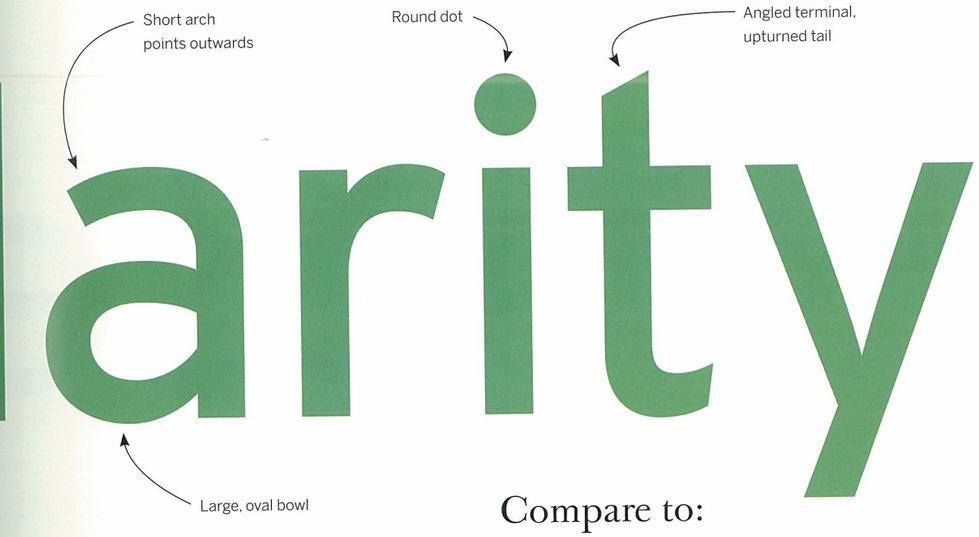
Interstate Regular



Just as **FF DIN** does for Germany's official type, **Interstate** is a typographic adaptation of American road signs. The alphabets of the U.S. Federal Highway Administration are spare concoctions of straight lines and semi-circles. Still, the simplicity and wide open forms of the FHWA Series suit it well for quick reading at a distance. Plus, over fifty years of exposure to the typefaces on mile markers and road signs has made them quite familiar and comfortable to American readers. Signs are gradually being replaced with those using a new typeface (Clearview Hwy), but we can continue to experience the old design in Tobias Frere-Jones's interpretation, a large and useful family of forty fonts.

Compare to:

gilaeytsRGMJ

FF DIN

gilaeytsRGMJ

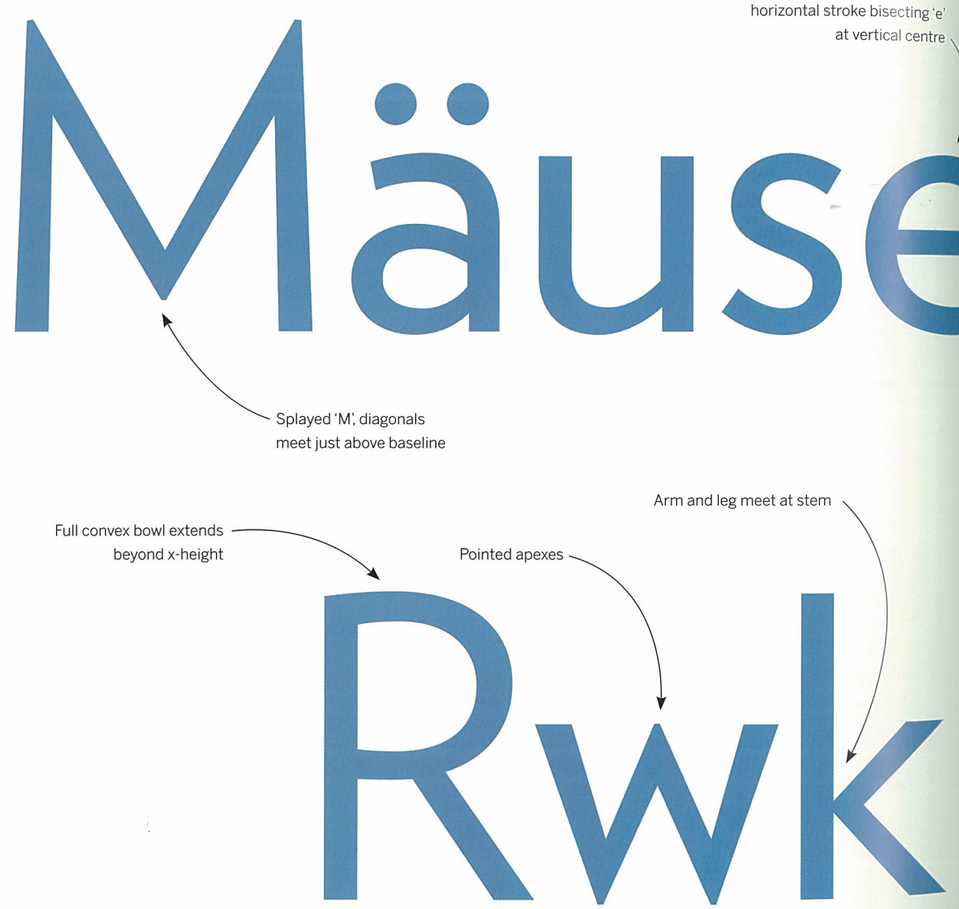
Metric

gilaeytsRGMJ

Calibre

Verlag

Designer: H&FJ staff // **Foundry:** Hoefler & Frere-Jones // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 2006 // **Classification:** Geometric Sans


Large eye with relatively light horizontal stroke bisecting 'e' at vertical centre
Splayed 'M', diagonals meet just above baseline
Full convex bowl extends beyond x-height
Pointed apexes
Arm and leg meet at stem
Mäuseouting
Rwk

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890 163

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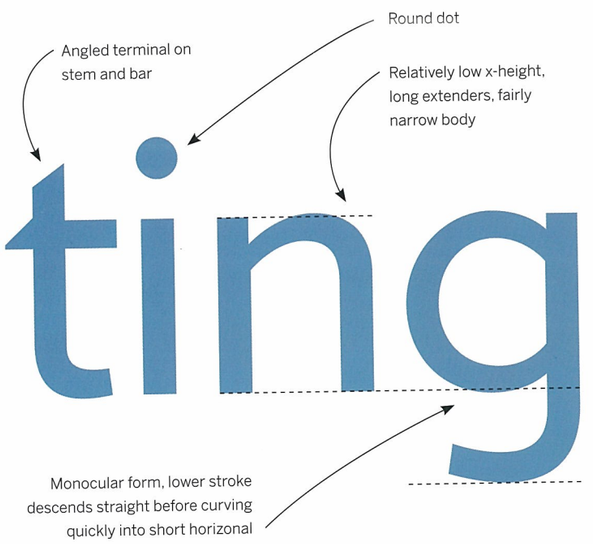
Verlag Book


Minimal contrast
Angled terminal on stem and bar
Round dot
Relatively low x-height, long extenders, fairly narrow body
Monocular form, lower stroke descends straight before curving quickly into short horizonal

Verlag is a successful adaptation of pre-war modernist sans serifs to a typographically sensitive family for 21st-century design. It combines the crispness of 1920s-era geometric pioneers Futura and Erbar with the gentler, more readable qualities of 1930s-era Metro, Tempo and Vogue. The lower x-height, pointed (but not pin-sharp) apexes, open apertures and full rounds make Verlag a very warm and elegant option among Geometrics. It was originally created for the Guggenheim Museum and later released publicly as an extremely useful thirty-font family with typographic niceties like short lining figures to harmonise with the small lowercase in running text. ***Good for:*** Situations where Futura doesn't have enough flexibility or grace.

Compare to:

Motagw

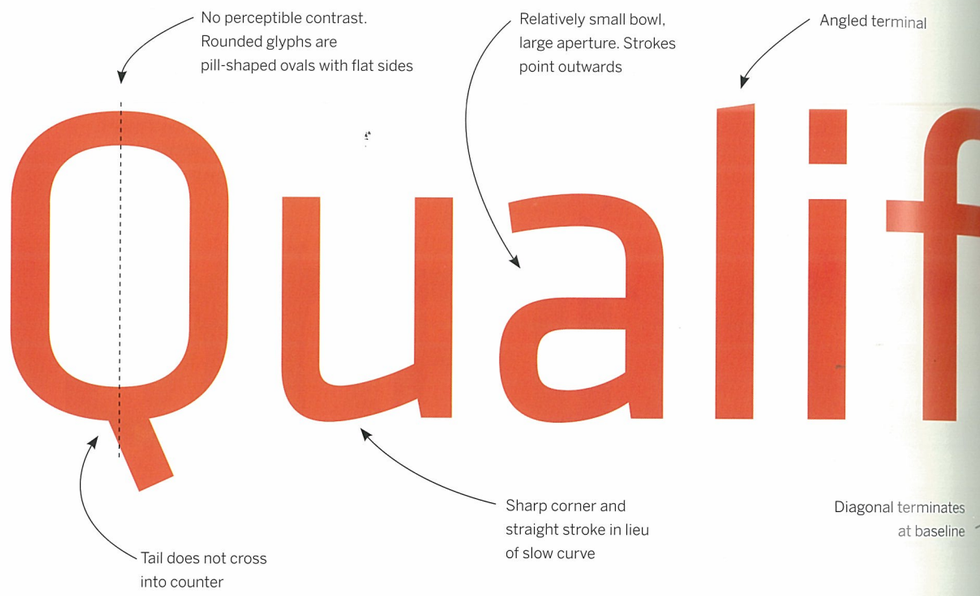
Neutraface 2 Text

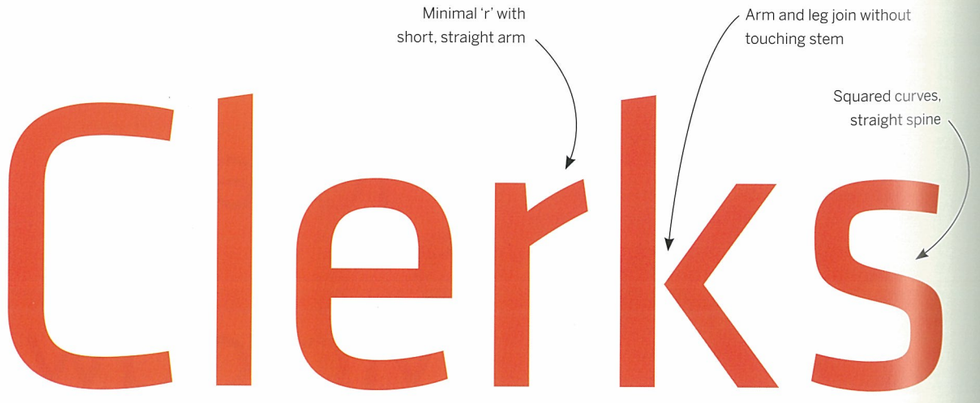
Motagw

Futura ND

Klavika

Designer: Eric Olson // **Foundry:** Process // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 2004 // **Classification:** Geometric Sans


No perceptible contrast. Rounded glyphs are pill-shaped ovals with flat sides
Relatively small bowl, large aperture. Strokes point outwards
Angled terminal
Tail does not cross into counter
Sharp corner and straight stroke in lieu of slow curve
Diagonal terminates at baseline
Qualifying



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abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890 163

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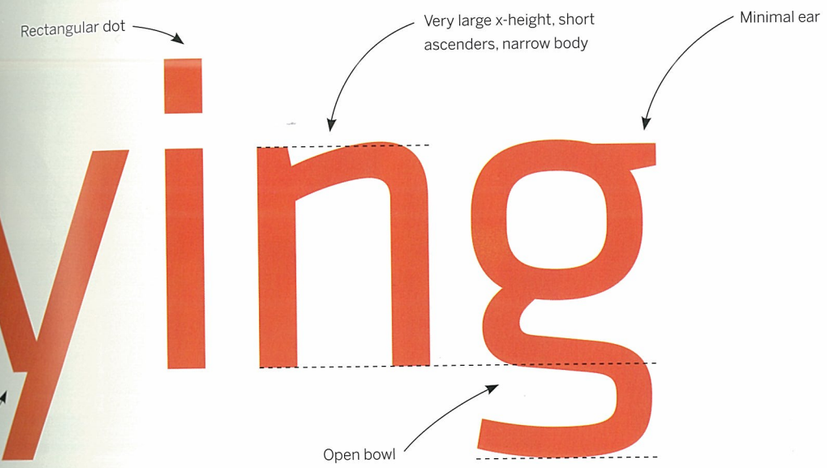
Klavika Regular



Released at the height of the 'Web 2.0' era, **Klavika** has become a prototypical sans serif of the information age. This is reinforced by the fact that it is the basis for the Facebook logo, but it's been widely used in many other markets as well, including the automobile, sports and publication industries. The foundation of the typeface is the pill shape. Lettershapes that are conventionally curved ('c', 'e', 'o', 's') are instead flat-sided with a slightly concave top and bottom. Rectangular Geometrics existed before, in 19th-century Display faces, and in the 1960s with Eurostile, but Klavika's freshness comes from its open apertures – terminals (even on the distinctive, open-bowled 'g') point outwards, allowing letters to breathe and relieving rigidity.

Compare to:

RMGK ayig

Forza Book

RMGK ayig

MVB Solano Gothic

RMGK ayig

FF Unit

MVB Solano Gothic

Designer: Mark van Bronkhorst // **Foundry:** MVB Fonts // **Country of origin:** United States
Release years: 2007–2010 // **Classification:** Geometric Sans

Alternative 'A' in MVB Solano Gothic Retro is round-topped with parallel verticals
AWAKENING
Retro 'K' with curved leg
Large x-height, moderate ascenders, long descenders, very narrow body
Ear extends from top of 'g' like an apple stem
Klang g
Stem takes sharp turn at baseline to form small tail
Binocular form with open lower bowl, alternative 'g' has monocular form

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abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890

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MVB Solano Gothic Medium

Retro, two-stroke 'N'

Rounded glyphs are rectangular, with flat top, bottom and sides

MVB Solano Gothic Bold was originally designed as a Display face for the city of Albany (near San Francisco). Named after the city's main road, the typeface needed to work on signage surrounded by early 20th-century architecture, yet in current settings. Following a common sign-painting and architectural lettering style of the era, the design is based on a rounded rectangle and simple monolinear strokes. Alternative 'Retro' fonts offer more decorative forms, such as a curved-leg 'K', round-topped 'A' and lowercase-style cap 'N'.
Good for: Compact headlines and infographics. References to vintage workmanship.

Compare to:

Klang

Forza Book

Klang

Heroic Condensed Regular

Klang

Klavika

Forza

Designer: H&FJ staff // **Foundry:** Hoefler & Frere-Jones // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 2010 // **Classification:** Geometric Sans

Very large x-height, short extenders, moderate width
Strokes terminate at 90° angles
Sanfedismo
Squared curves, nearly horizontal spine
Stroke thins slightly where it meets stem
Diagonal strokes connect to stem with horizontal bar
JKg
Monocular 'g', bowl floats above baseline allowing for short descender

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890

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Forza Book

Square dot, slightly heavier than stem
No perceptible contrast
Sanfedismo
Rounded rectangles with flat top and bottom and slightly convex sides
Corners slightly sharper in counter than outline

When people think square sans, Bank Gothic or Eurostile usually come to mind. But these designs have become quite dated, each a particular relic of their time. **Forza** closely follows Eurostile's path, but forges its own way where it makes good sense: rounded shapes are concave only on their sides, curved strokes meet stems with a thinner, angled stroke or horizontal. These refinements move the appearance away from the blobby vintage TV shape associated with Eurostile, particularly in its counters. Forza is actually the de-seriffed version of Vitesse, which was designed earlier. Both are strong, masculine typefaces that command attention. ***Good for:*** Athletics. Automobiles. Communicating toughness and authority.

Compare to:

SJKaefsod

Eurostile

SJKaefsod

MVB Solano Gothic

Humanist Sans

158 Gill Sans

160 FF Yoga Sans

162 Frutiger

164 Myriad

166 Verdana

168 Syntax

170 Cronos

172 TheSans

174 Auto

176 Optima

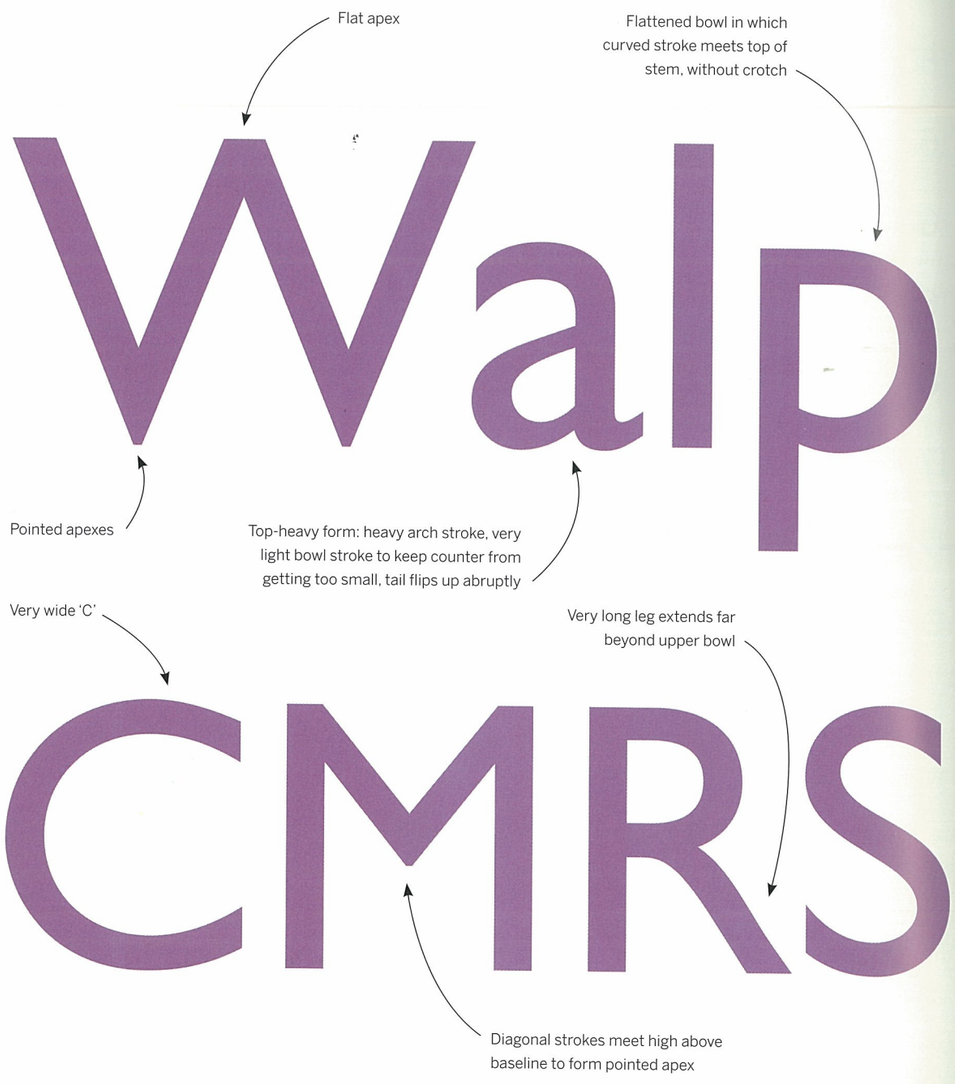
178 Beorcana

XXXXXXXXXXXXX

Background typefaces are FF Yoga Sans and Auto 1

Gill Sans

Designer: Eric Gill // **Foundry:** Monotype // **Country of origin:** United Kingdom
Release years: 1928–1932 // **Classification:** Humanist/Geometric Sans


Flat apex
Flattened bowl in which curved stroke meets top of stem, without crotch
Walpurgite
Pointed apexes
Top-heavy form: heavy arch stroke, very light bowl stroke to keep counter from getting too small, tail flips up abruptly
Very wide 'C'
Very long leg extends far beyond upper bowl
CMRS
Diagonal strokes meet high above baseline to form pointed apex

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890

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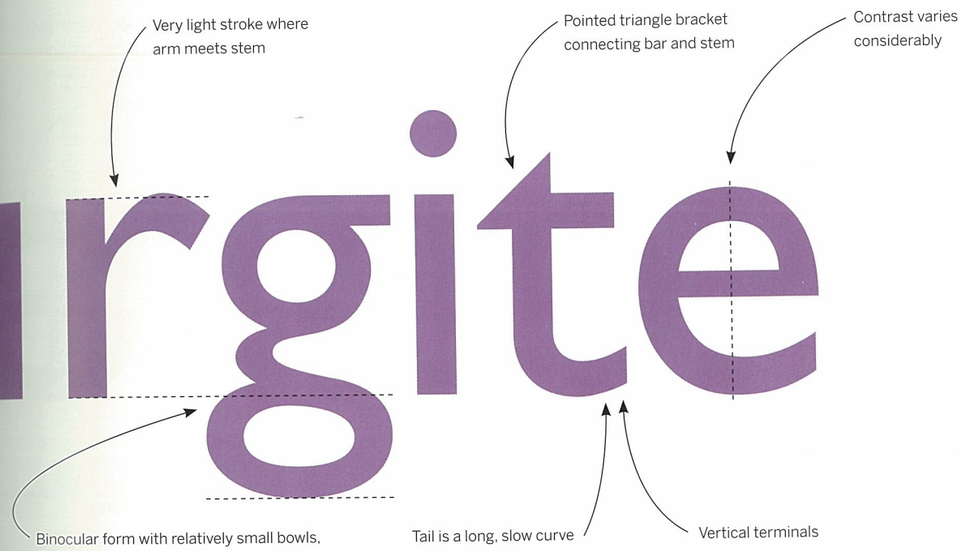
Gill Sans Regular


Very light stroke where arm meets stem
Pointed triangle bracket connecting bar and stem
Contrast varies considerably
Walpurgite
Binocular form with relatively small bowls, the ear is a simple horizontal stroke
Tail is a long, slow curve
Vertical terminals

Long a standard part of the Mac's pre-installed font bundle, **Gill Sans** has become known to modern-day users as an elegant sans option when compared to the others they find on their computer. But in many ways, Eric Gill's typeface, a follower of Edward Johnston's type for the London Underground, is an awkward mix of Geometric and Humanist ideas – from its circular 'o' to its dynamic, calligraphic 'a'. Uppercase widths vary wildly. The long-legged 'R' causes spacing issues, especially in the lighter weights. And the 'g' is an odd concoction that even Gill himself fittingly called a 'pair of spectacles'. Still, there is lasting charm in this face, and it has become synonymous with British culture ever since it debuted.

Compare to:

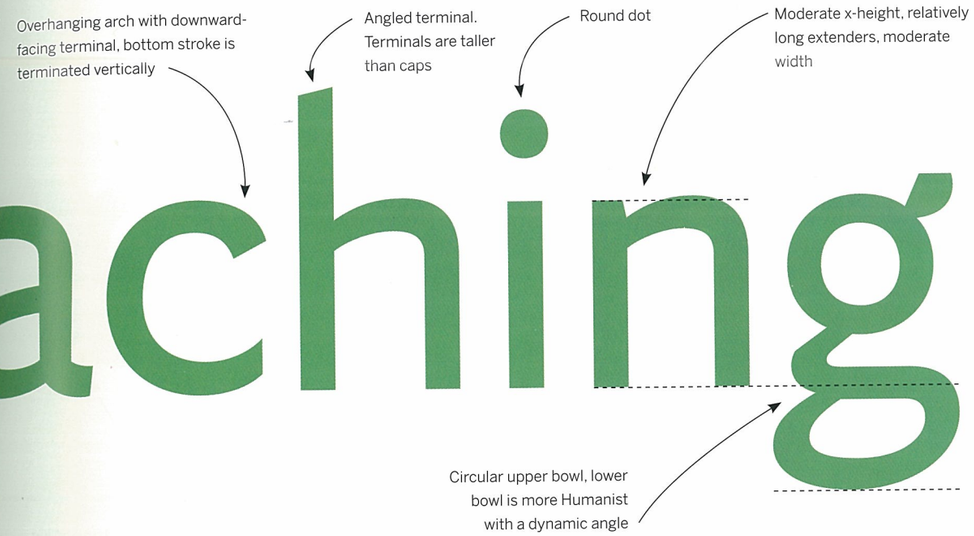
RMagype

FF Yoga Sans

FF Yoga Sans

Designer: Xavier Dupré // **Foundry:** FontFont // **Origin:** Cambodia, Germany
Release year: 2009 // **Classification:** Humanist Sans

Minimal, angled contrast
The 'o' is nearly circular with no stroke contrast
Simple form without horizontal bar
Third stroke crosses second, creating three upper terminals
GJW
The 'J' descends after a hard angle


Overhanging arch with downward-facing terminal, bottom stroke is terminated vertically
Angled terminal. Terminals are taller than caps
Round dot
Moderate x-height, relatively long extenders, moderate width
Reproaching
Circular upper bowl, lower bowl is more Humanist with a dynamic angle

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890 163

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FF Yoga Sans Regular

FF Yoga Sans could be considered a **Gill Sans** for the 21st century. It speaks the same language as its ancestor, but Xavier Dupré reduces the stroke contrast, regularises widths and corrals all Gill's disparate approaches into a more cohesive design. Much of this is encapsulated in the 'a', which actually resembles an early Gill Sans sketch that had a tamer character with a smooth, even stroke finishing in a more graceful tail. FF Yoga Sans is part of a double-barrelled assault on the traditional classics, with its partner an update of Humanist serifs like Garamond. Not since **FF Scala** has there been such a bold attempt to redefine these models. ***Good for:*** When Gill Sans is wanted but its idiosyncrasies are not.

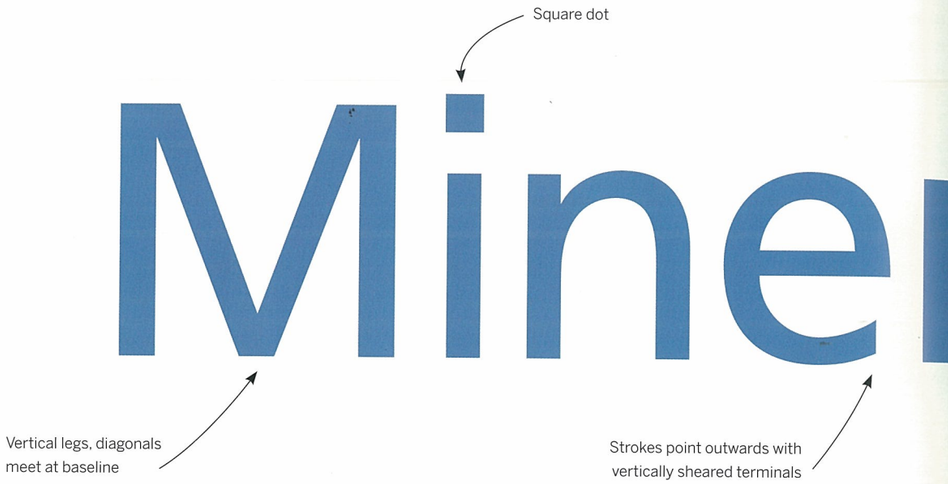
Compare to:

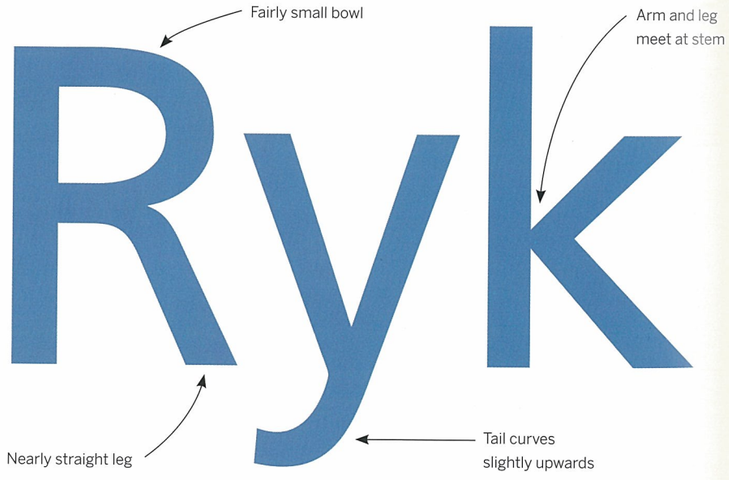
RMagype

Gill Sans

Frutiger

Designer: Adrian Frutiger // **Foundry:** D. Stempel AG, Linotype // **Country of origin:** France, Germany
Release year: 1976 // **Classification:** Humanist Sans


Square dot
Mineralogist
Vertical legs, diagonals meet at baseline
Strokes point outwards with vertically sheared terminals



ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890
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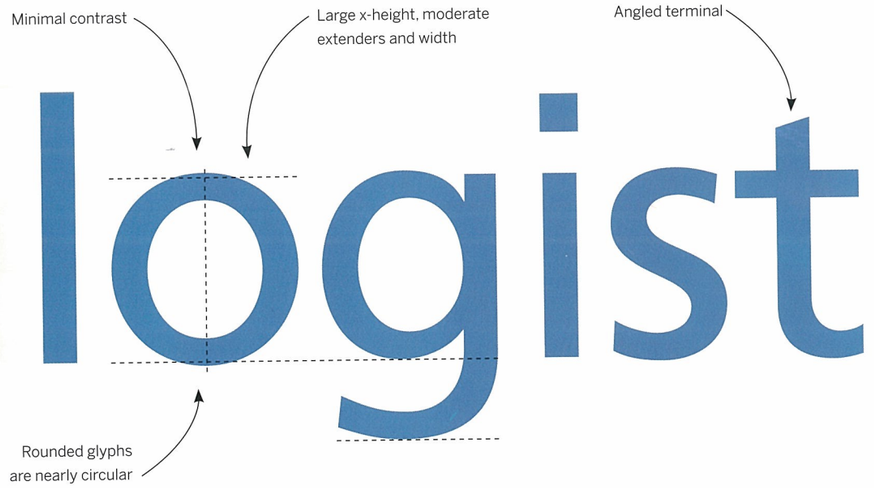
Frutiger 55 Roman



Designed in the mid-1970s for the Charles de Gaulle Airport near Paris, Adrian Frutiger's eponymous typeface has become the wayfinding standard, adopted by airports and other institutions around the world. Frutiger began the commission by adapting his previous design, **Univers**, but favouring a Humanistic approach that aids legibility, obviously a critical factor in airport signage. Thanks to its open apertures, **Frutiger** is famously readable from a wide range of angles and distances. Still, there is a lot of Univers in this typeface, with its very slight stroke contrast and plain forms.
Good for: Simple, unaffected clarity.

Compare to:

MRgeaksyi

Myriad

MRgeaksyi

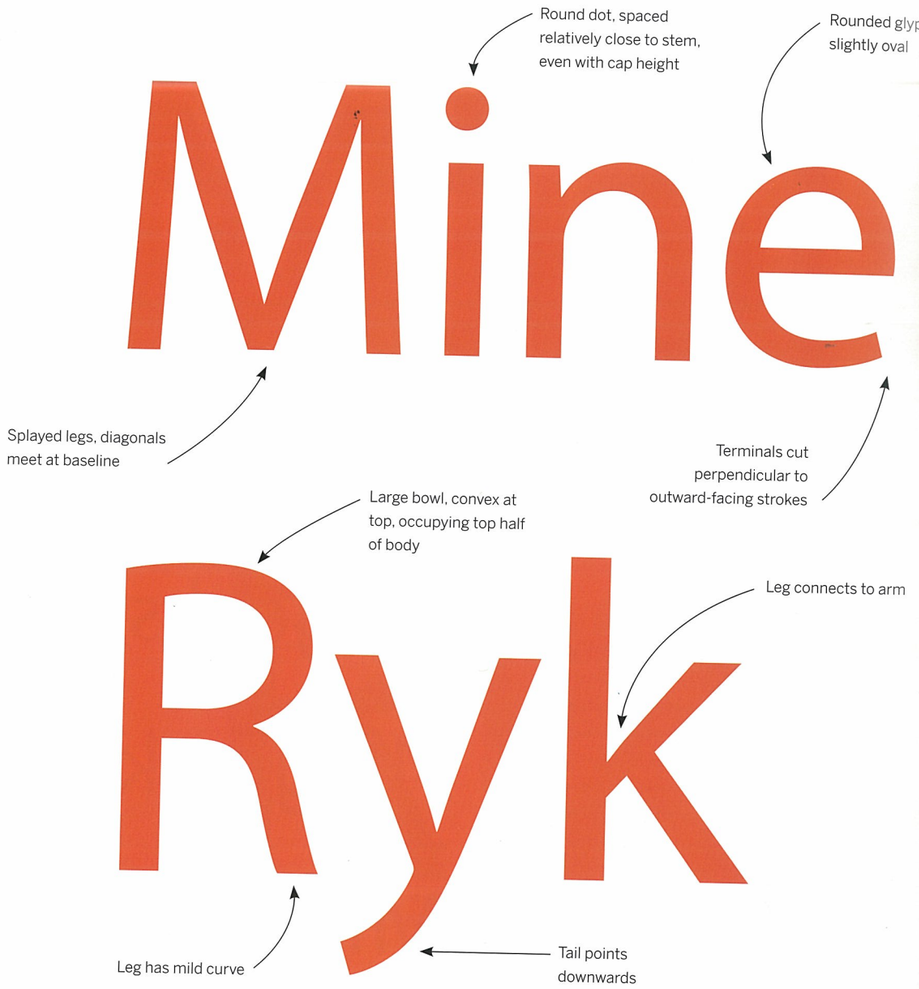
Verdana

MRgeaksyi

Univers

Myriad

Designer: Carol Twombly, Robert Slimbach // **Foundry:** Adobe // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 1992 // **Classification:** Humanist Sans


Round dot, spaced relatively close to stem, even with cap height
Rounded glyphs are slightly oval
Splayed legs, diagonals meet at baseline
Terminals cut perpendicular to outward-facing strokes
Large bowl, convex at top, occupying top half of body
Leg connects to arm
Leg has mild curve
Tail points downwards
Mineralogist
Ryk

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890 163

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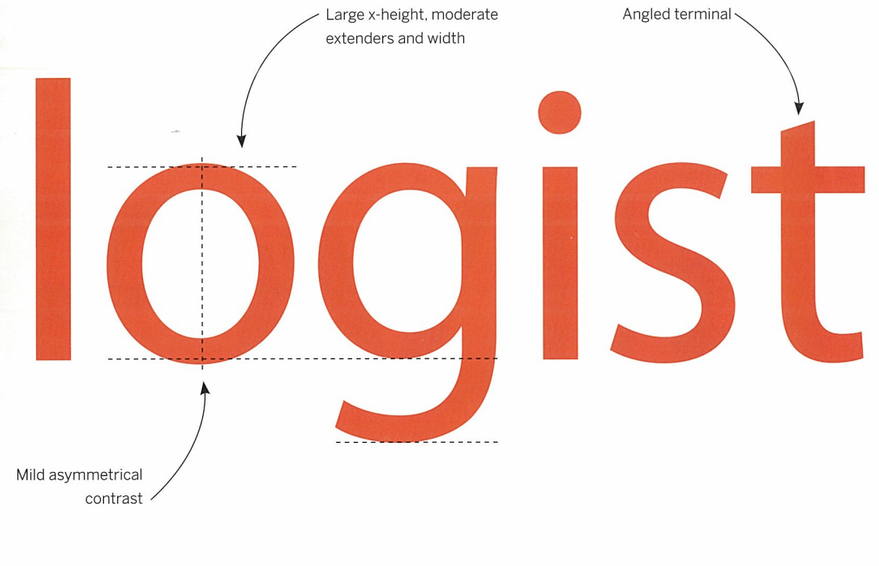
Myriad Regular



A skeptic might denigrate this typeface, calling it simply 'Adobe's **Frutiger**'. **Myriad** does owe a lot to the grandaddy of modern Humanist sans serifs, but it brings its own contributions to the table. Where Frutiger's curved strokes end abruptly with mostly vertical cuts, Myriad has angled terminals that naturally follow the path of the stroke. Letters like the 'M' and 'R' are more Humanistic as well, and the dots are round, not square. All these make Myriad a slightly warmer, friendlier Frutiger, while retaining its modern simplicity. These attributes make it an ideal identity face for companies like Apple that want to be high-tech but approachable. Functionally, Myriad also offers more as the family is much larger.

Compare to:

MRgeaksyi

Frutiger

Verdana

Designer: Matthew Carter // **Foundry:** Microsoft // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 1994 // **Classification:** Humanist Sans

Bars help distinguish the letter 'I' and number '1' at small sizes on screen
Wide form creates large eye
Square dot, relatively close to stem
Slight flaring at vertically sheared terminals
Leg connects to arm
Iuvenis
Ok
Very large x-height, fairly short extenders, wide body
Outward-facing arch creates open aperture
Mega
Mild contrast, vertical stress
Diagonal strokes meet above baseline
Very large bowl

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890
¼ ½ ⅝ [àóüßç](.,:;?!$£&-*){ÀÓÜÇ}

Verdana Regular

Matthew Carter is probably one of the most well-known living type designers. He gained that position not by imposing a recognisable personal style but by solving design problems, by creating functional type that serves a specific need. Just like **Bell Centennial**, **Verdana** is another case in point. Its large, broad lowercase letters with slightly flaring terminals, its seriffed 'l', 'J' and 'j', and its loose spacing can appear ungainly when viewed large or in print. But this typeface was made for the screen. Every design decision makes Verdana the most legible small Text option for the coarse resolutions of all but the most modern displays. The family, along with Georgia, was recently expanded to twenty styles, including a very welcome condensed width.

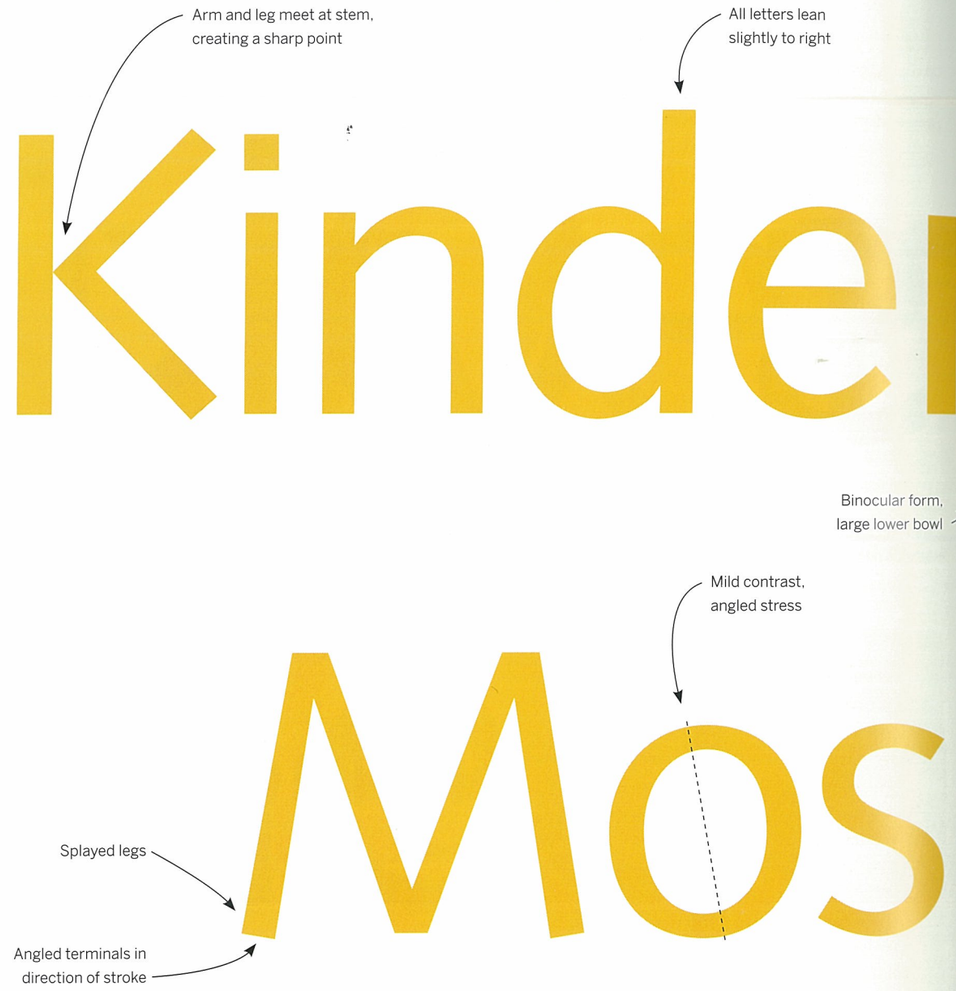
Compare to:

IMaesgky

Frutiger

Syntax

Designer: Hans Eduard Meier // **Foundry:** D. Stempel AG, Linotype // **Country of origin:** Switzerland, Germany
Release year: 1968 // **Classification:** Humanist Sans


Arm and leg meet at stem, creating a sharp point
All letters lean slightly to right
Kindergarten
Binocular form, large lower bowl
Mild contrast, angled stress
Mos
Splayed legs
Angled terminals in direction of stroke

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890
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Syntax Roman

Small, circular upper bowl, prominent link juts to the left of bowls
Fairly large x-height, moderate extenders, narrow body
Fairly tall stem
garten
Very large bowl extends beyond arch

One of the first of its kind, **Syntax** is a sans serif that shows obvious ties to Humanist serif roots. It is based on Stempel Garamond, and while it wouldn't work to simply trim the serifs off an old-style book face, Syntax comes very close. The forms are calligraphic, with a fairly consistent angled axis that gives Syntax a dynamic motion. Every character leans slightly forward, even the stems, adding to this sans serif's unusually forward movement. Angled strokes also terminate at an angle, rather than sitting flat on the baseline. This is an uncommon feature and can be a distraction when large, but at Text sizes it feels like a natural part of Syntax's lively attitude. ***Good for:*** Modernising and energising text that would otherwise be set in a serif.

Compare to:

Kaesgt

Today Sans

Kaesgt

Cronos

Cronos

Designer: Robert Slimbach // **Foundry:** Adobe // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 1996 // **Classification:** Humanist Sans

Pen-influenced downstrokes extend beyond upstrokes

Soft, rounded terminal

Moderate x-height and extenders, fairly narrow body

Māgnopere

Binocular form

Slightly angled terminals

Plus

Open bowl reveals calligraphic stroke

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz ctstsp 1234567890 163

¼ ⅔ ⅝ [àóüßç](.,:;?!$£&-*){ÀÓÜÇ}

Cronos Regular

Moderate contrast, angled stress

Bottom stroke faces outwards, creating a very large aperture

Small dent in eye where calligraphic stroke changes direction

Māgnopere

Calligraphic pointed terminals

Like **Syntax**, **Cronos** echoes the organic feeling and readability of old-style serif type. But, in contrast to the angular energy of Syntax, Cronos has a soft, calligraphic finish with pointed curves and rounded terminals. These letters genuinely appear to be written by a very steady hand. The overall effect is quite pleasant and comfortable. Adobe gave Cronos its optical sizes treatment, offering low-contrast, large x-height type for small text and more expressive, higher-contrast type for Display uses, but the adjustments are minimal compared to optical sizes of other families, especially Garamond Premier. See also the older Today Sans by Volker Küster. ***Good for:*** Organic goods. Contemporary wedding invitations. A subdued alternative to calligraphy.

Compare to:

MGpets

Today Sans

MGpets

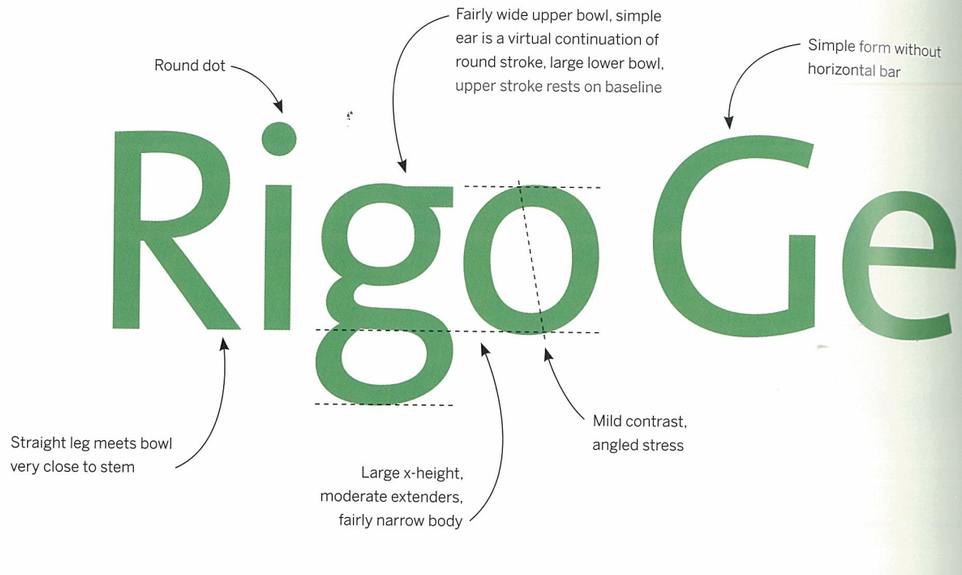
Syntax

MGpets

Optima

TheSans

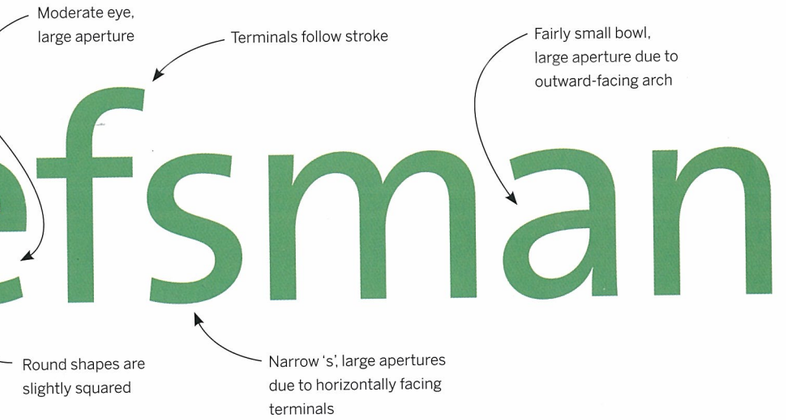
Designer: Luc(as) de Groot // **Foundry:** LucasFonts // **Country of origin:** Germany
Release year: 1994 // **Classification:** Humanist Sans


Round dot
Fairly wide upper bowl, simple ear is a virtual continuation of round stroke, large lower bowl, upper stroke rests on baseline
Simple form without horizontal bar
Rigo
Straight leg meets bowl very close to stem
Large x-height, moderate extenders, fairly narrow body
Mild contrast, angled stress

Alternate glyphs

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz ck ct st fj 1234567890
163 ¼ ½ ¾ ⅔ ⅝ ⅝ [àóüßç](.,:;?!$£&-*){ÀÓÜÇ}

TheSans Plain


Moderate eye, large aperture
Terminals follow stroke
Fairly small bowl, large aperture due to outward-facing arch
Geldefsman
Round shapes are slightly squared
Narrow 's', large apertures due to horizontally facing terminals

TheSans belongs to one of the original *superfamilies*, a collective system of typefaces, called Thesis, that includes a slab (TheSerif), a semi-slab (TheMix) and a serif (TheAntiqua). TheSans has very Humanist bones, but very little of its contrast. Its personality can range from mildly informal to official, but its dynamic foundation ensures that it is never dull. This has made TheSans and its counterparts some of the most popular typefaces for contemporary identities, used by any organisation that wants to appear simultaneously modern, approachable, active and professional. TheSans offers a few alternative characters: single-storey forms of 'a' and 'g' for a more casual demeanour, and its signature oddity that originally came as standard, a 'Q' with a disconnected tail.

Compare to:

GRaesgo

Auto 1

GRaesgo

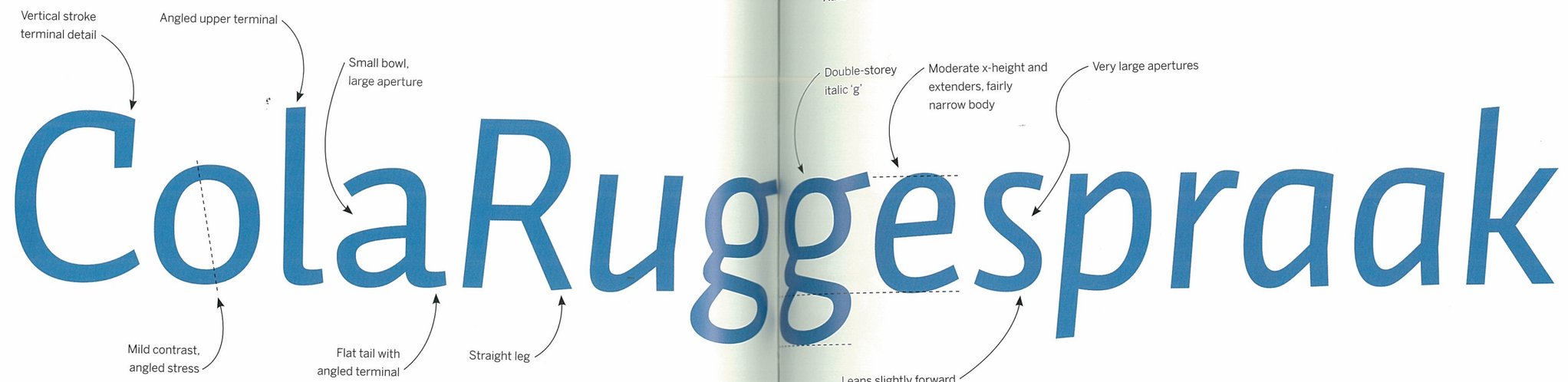
Syntax

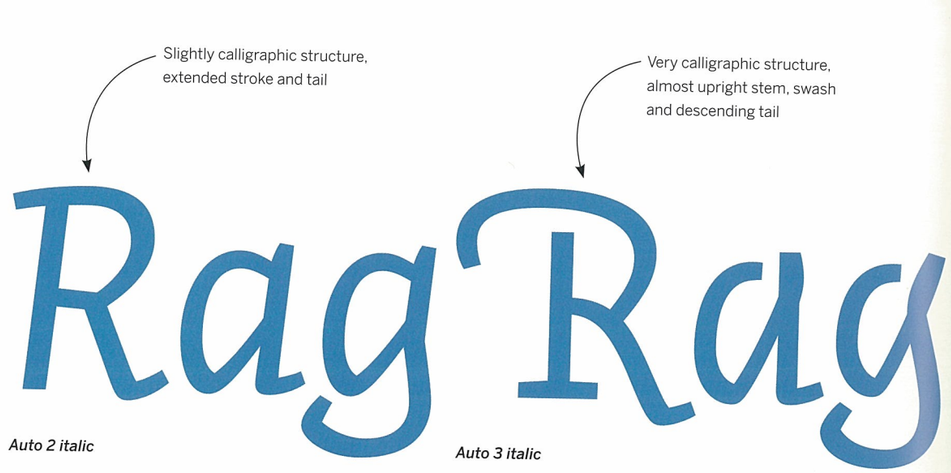
GRaesgo

Frutiger

Auto

Designer: Akiem Helmling, Bas Jacobs, Sami Kortemäki // **Foundry:** Underware // **Country of origin:** The Netherlands
Release year: 2005 // **Classification:** Humanist Sans




Slightly calligraphic structure, extended stroke and tail
Very calligraphic structure, almost upright stem, swash and descending tail
Rag
Rag

Auto 2 italic

Auto 3 italic

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890

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Auto 1

Double-storey italic 'g'
Moderate x-height and extenders, fairly narrow body
Very large apertures
Leans slightly forward

From an innovative trio of Dutch, Finnish and German designers comes a unique concept: a typeface with not one, but three italics. First, the roman: a sprightly, monolinear Humanist. Where **Cronos** feels like careful calligraphy, **Auto** is quick writing – the clear but energetic marks of a lively pen. The italics offer increasingly expressive forms. The progression is like the growth of a plant, starting with basic stems that grow from buds into long vines that visibly overlap where they change direction, and that then extend to long swashes. The three options let users choose the level of embellishment while retaining the type's basic weight and constitution. This is the same character playing different roles.

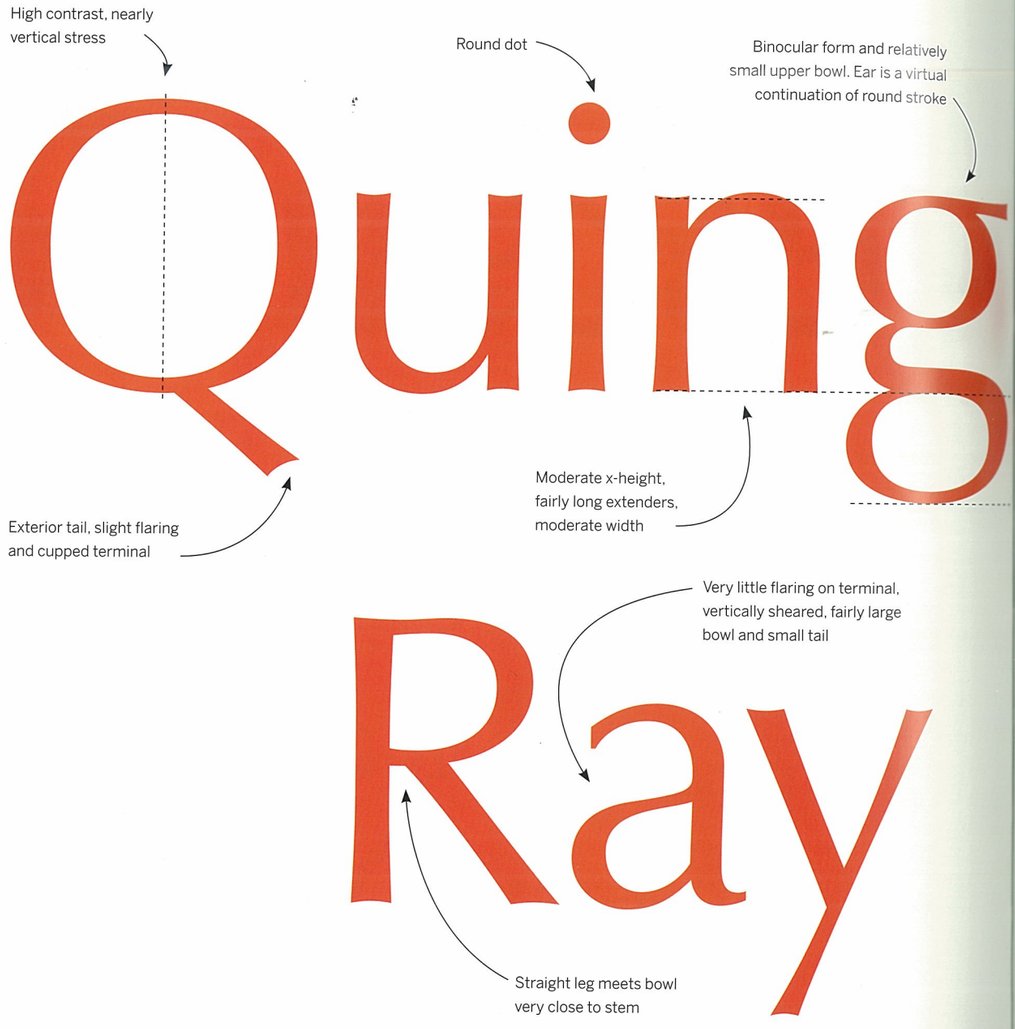
Compare to:

Rageslk

Doko

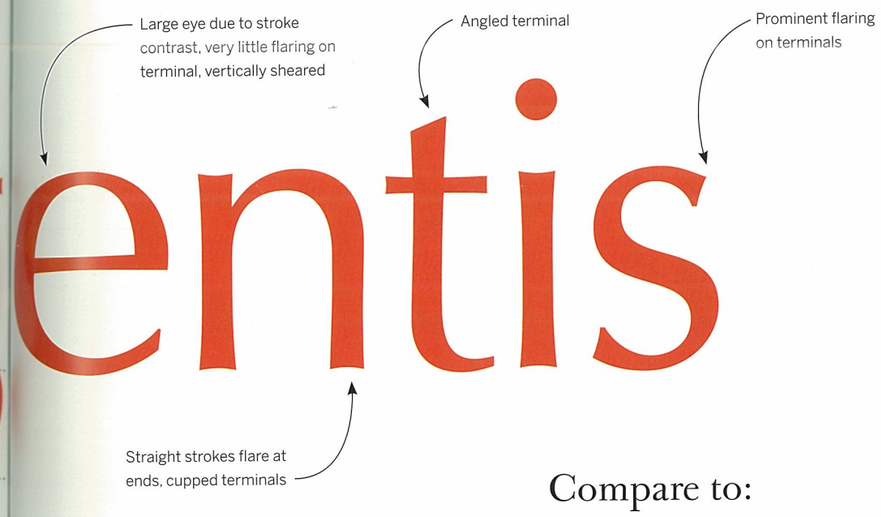
Optima

Designer: Hermann Zapf // **Foundry:** D. Stempel AG, Linotype // **Country of origin:** Germany
Release year: 1958 // **Classification:** Humanist/Inscriptional Sans


High contrast, nearly vertical stress
Round dot
Binocular form and relatively small upper bowl. Ear is a virtual continuation of round stroke
Exterior tail, slight flaring and cupped terminal
Moderate x-height, fairly long extenders, moderate width
Very little flaring on terminal, vertically sheared, fairly large bowl and small tail
Straight leg meets bowl very close to stem

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890
¼ ½ ¾ [àóüßç](.,:;?!$£&-*){ÀÓÜÇ}

Optima Roman


Large eye due to stroke contrast, very little flaring on terminal, vertically sheared
Angled terminal
Prominent flaring on terminals
Straight strokes flare at ends, cupped terminals

Optima is one of those typefaces that defies categorisation. In a way, it's a Humanist sans – built like a serif without serifs – but its vertical stress is more Rational than Humanist. Perhaps it's actually Inscriptional, with its concave strokes that follow classical proportions and end in cupped terminals. To some, this split personality is a negative trait, demonstrating an identity crisis – it can't decide what it wants to be and ends up being nothing. But tell that to the cosmetic and pharmaceutical industries that have adopted Optima as their banner, utilising its elegant serenity to label all manner of creams, ointments and makeup. ***Good for:*** The stuff of the establishment. Tranquil beauty. Wellness.

Compare to:

GQagefs

Beorcana

GQagefs

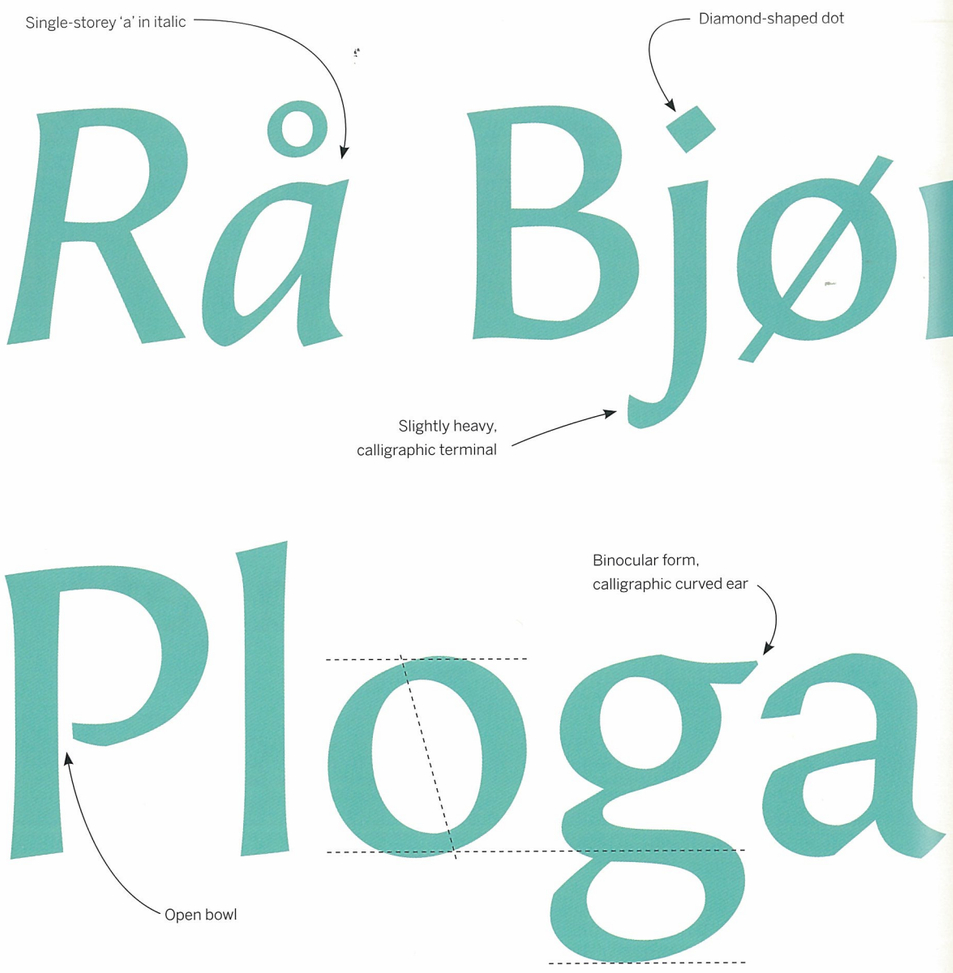
Cronos

GQagefs

SangBleu

Beorcana

Designer: Carl Crossgrove // **Foundry:** Terrestrial Design // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 2006 // **Classification:** Humanist Sans



ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890

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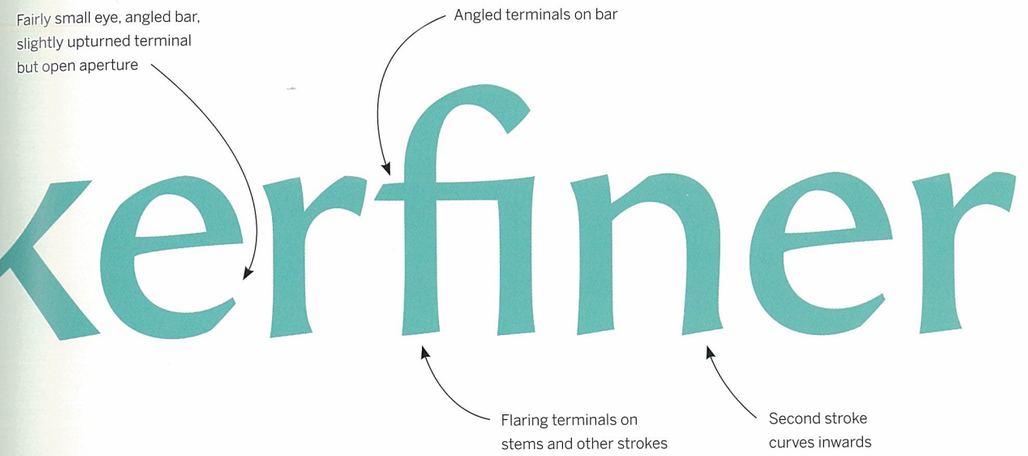
Beorcana Regular


Fairly small eye, angled bar, slightly upturned terminal but open aperture
Angled terminals on bar
Flaring terminals on stems and other strokes
Second stroke curves inwards

Beorcana is about as calligraphic as you can get without being a serif or script. More than fourteen years in the making, Carl Crossgrove’s design represents his long commitment to the skill of making letters with a pen. The tool here is a broad-nib pen held at a relatively consistent angle. The rhythm and contrast are as present as in any Renaissance roman, but there are no serifs; instead there is a subtle flare at the end of strokes created by pressure on (or a turn of) the pen. These gestures are well suited to lovely headlines and ornamental work, and there are plenty of flourishing swashes in the Display italics. But Beorcana is designed to set text, too – books and tiny captions even – using special optical versions that have the strength and proportions required for small type.

Compare to:

GMWeagoy

Optima Roman

GMWeagoy

Cronos Regular

Neo-Humanist Sans

182 **FF Meta**

184 Amplitude

186 Fedra Sans

188 FF Dax

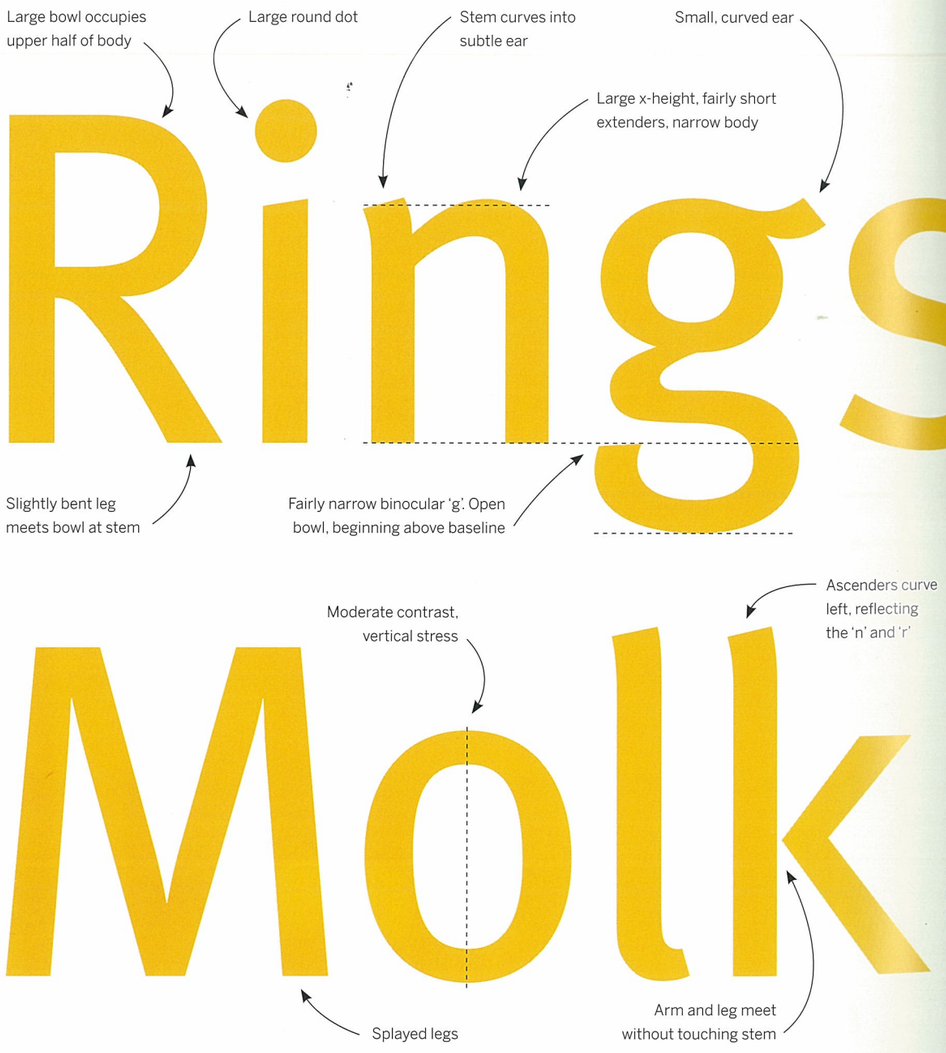
190 **FF Balance**

XXXXX

Background typefaces are Amplitude and FF Dax

FF Meta

Designer: Erik Spiekermann // **Foundry:** FontFont // **Country of origin:** Germany
Release year: 1991 // **Classification:** Neo-Humanist Sans

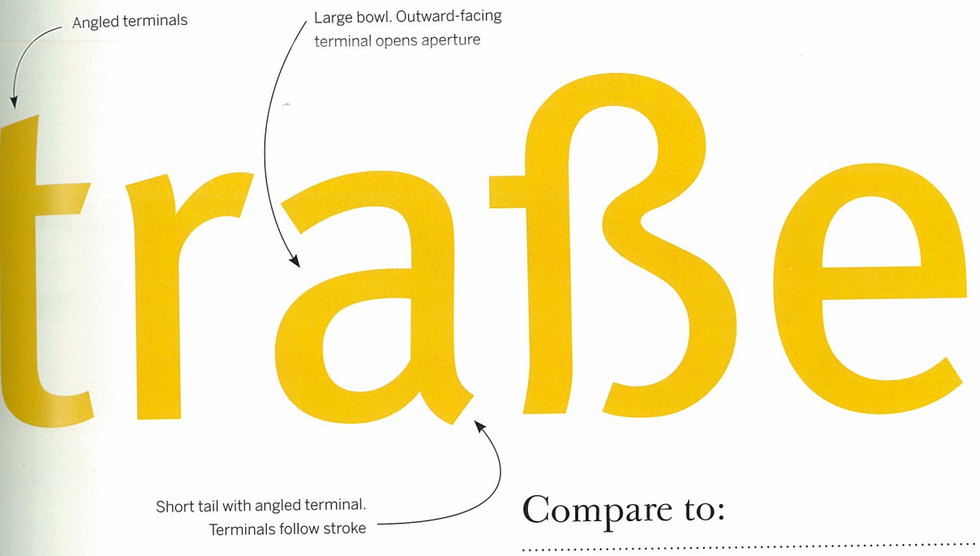

Large bowl occupies upper half of body
Large round dot
Stem curves into subtle ear
Small, curved ear
Large x-height, fairly short extenders, narrow body
Ringstraße
Slightly bent leg meets bowl at stem
Fairly narrow binocular 'g'. Open bowl, beginning above baseline
Moderate contrast, vertical stress
Ascenders curve left, reflecting the 'n' and 'r'
Molk
Splayed legs
Arm and leg meet without touching stem

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz ƈkftſbſþ 1234567890

163 ¼ ½ ¾ [àóüßç](.,:;?!$£&-*){ÀÓÜÇ}

FF Meta Book


Angled terminals
Large bowl. Outward-facing terminal opens aperture
Ringstraße
Short tail with angled terminal. Terminals follow stroke

The first rendition of Erik Spiekermann's most famous typeface was a commission from the West German Post Office. They never used the design, but the subsequent **FF Meta** became one of the most successful typefaces designed in the digital era. The brief was a spatially economical face for use at small sizes on cheap paper. Spiekermann's solution was a combination of Humanist and Grotesque concepts, a mildly rationalised design with open forms and just enough of the pen in its contrast and forms to maintain readability. The ideas in FF Meta, along with the FontFont label he co-founded, ushered in a new genre of sans serifs that exemplify digital typography. ***Good for:*** Modern, readable text; twenty-five years later, it still feels fresh.

Compare to:

RMaegils

FF Unit

RMaegils

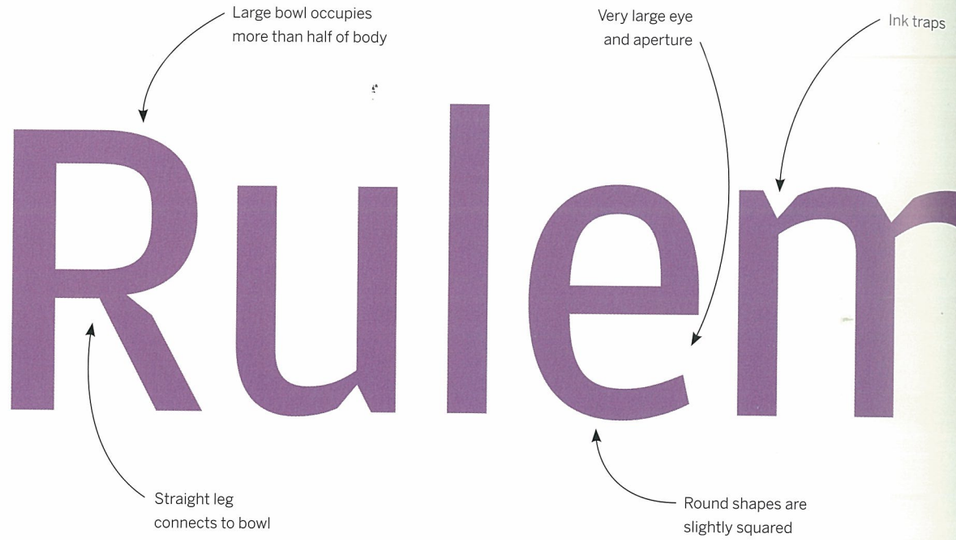
FF Meta Serif

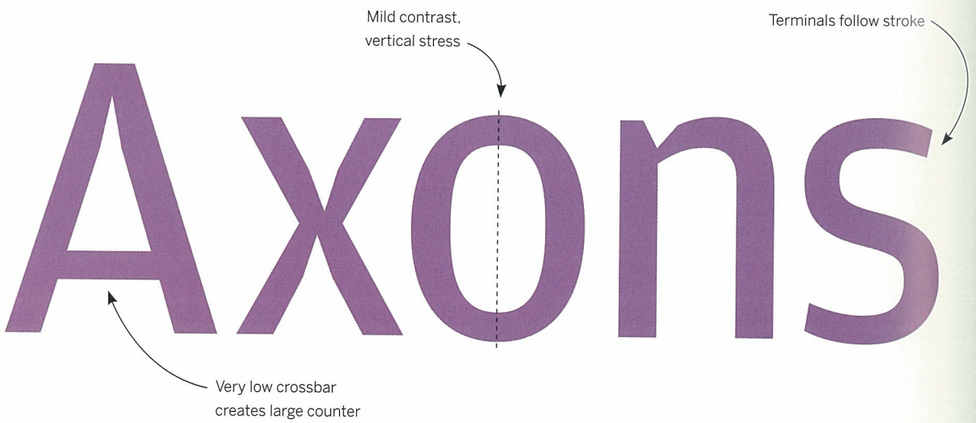
RMaegils

Farao

Amplitude

Designer: Christian Schwartz // **Foundry:** Font Bureau // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 2003 // **Classification:** Neo-Humanist Sans


Large bowl occupies more than half of body
Very large eye and aperture
Ink traps
Rulemaking
Straight leg connects to bowl
Round shapes are slightly squared



ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890

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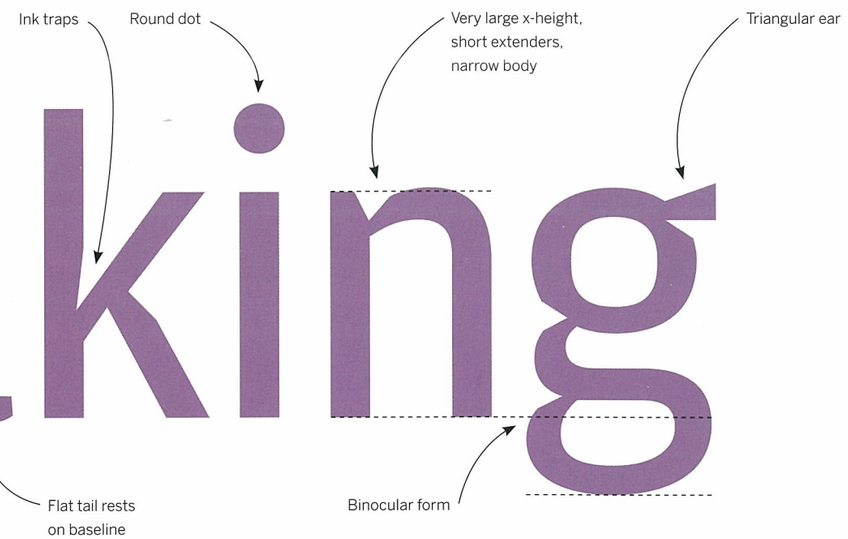
Amplitude Regular



At its face, **Amplitude** is in the vein of **FF Meta**: a condensed, upright blend of Humanist and Grotesque. Here, the apertures are even larger, and the x-height is massive. But the shtick that makes Amplitude unique is its prominent triangular nicks that carve out space at stroke junctions. The 'ink trap' is normally a functional device, used to compensate for ink gain (see **Bell Centennial** pp. 124–5), but Christian Schwartz makes it an aesthetic device, giving a stylish edge to headlines without sacrificing the type's readability in Text. That combination has made Amplitude a 21st-century favourite of publication designers who value its large family of weights and widths. ***Good for:*** Straightforward text and expressive headlines using the same typeface.

Compare to:

NMRagek

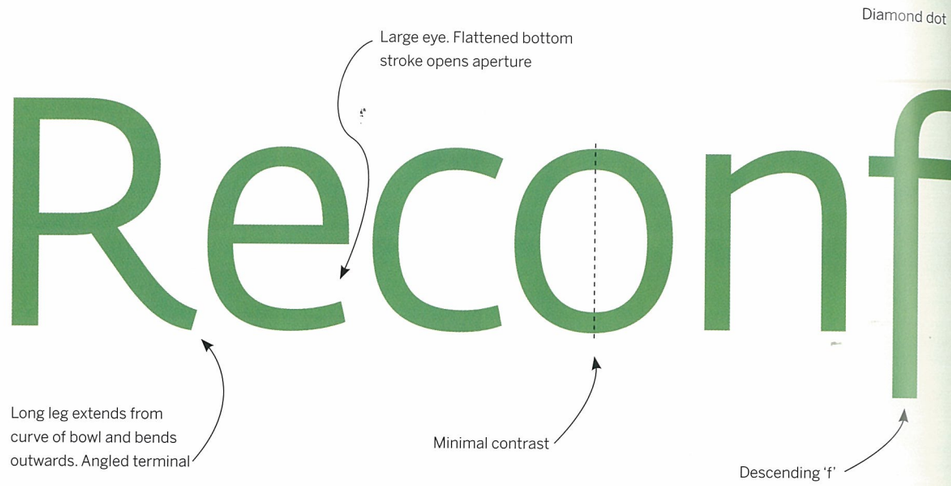
FF Meta

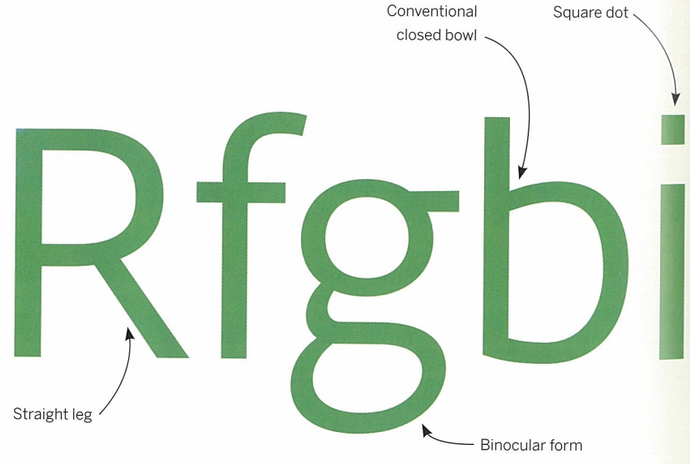
NMRagek

Bell Centennial

Fedra Sans

Designer: Peter Bilak // **Foundry:** Typotheque // **Country of origin:** The Netherlands
Release years: 2001–2005 // **Classification:** Neo-Humanist Sans


Large eye. Flattened bottom stroke opens aperture
Diamond dot
Reconfigurable
Long leg extends from curve of bowl and bends outwards. Angled terminal
Minimal contrast
Descending 'f'



Fedra Sans Alt Std Book

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890 163
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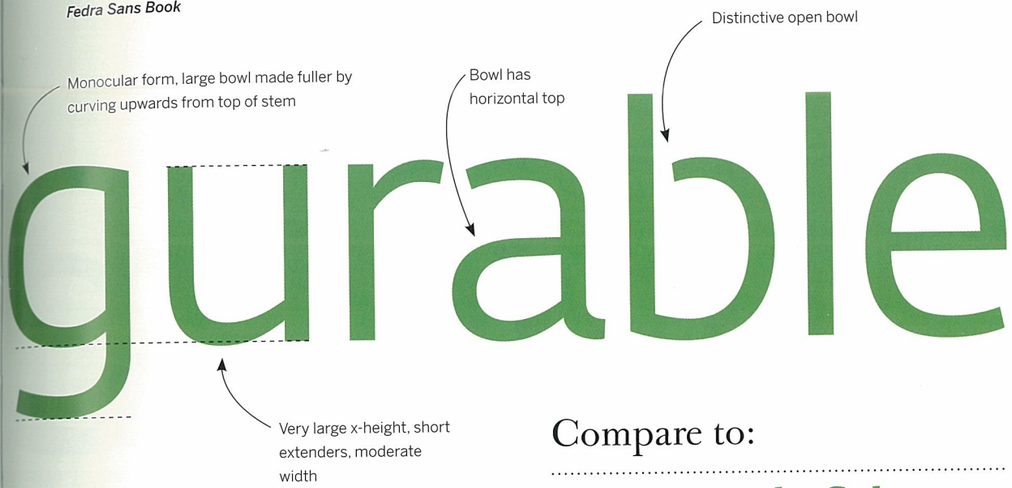
Fedra Sans Book


Monocular form, large bowl made fuller by curving upwards from top of stem
Bowl has horizontal top
Distinctive open bowl
Reconfigurable
Very large x-height, short extenders, moderate width

This typeface was born from a client request to 'de-protestantise **Univers**'. Among the Neo-Humanists, **Fedra Sans** is indeed a free spirit, enlivened with various features inspired by handwriting. In addition to its very large x-height (with stunted caps and ascenders) are diamond dots, open bowls, a spurless 'g' and 'b', a descending roman 'f' and an 'R' and 'k' with outward-curving legs. None of these quirks affect Fedra's readability, which benefits from the large apertures and sturdiness of a typeface intended for the computer screen as well as print. But if the situation calls for more conventional forms, there is Fedra Sans Alt, a restrained version that retains the original's intrinsic identity, proving there is more to the face than its idiosyncrasies.

Compare to:

PRWabfikg

Auto

PRWabfikg

Klavika

PRWabfikg

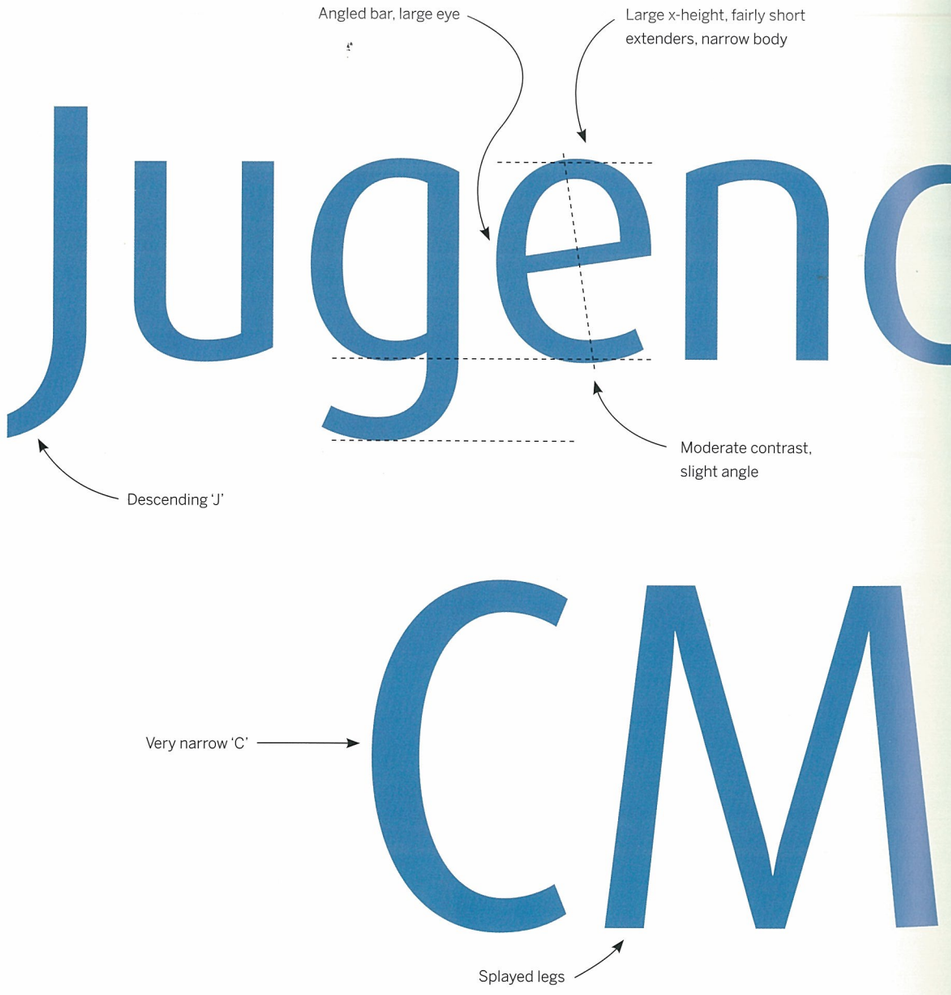
TheSans

PRWabfikg

Fedra Serif A

FF Dax

Designer: Hans Reichel // **Foundry:** FontFont // **Country of origin:** Germany
Release years: 1995–1997 // **Classification:** Neo-Humanist Sans



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abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890 163

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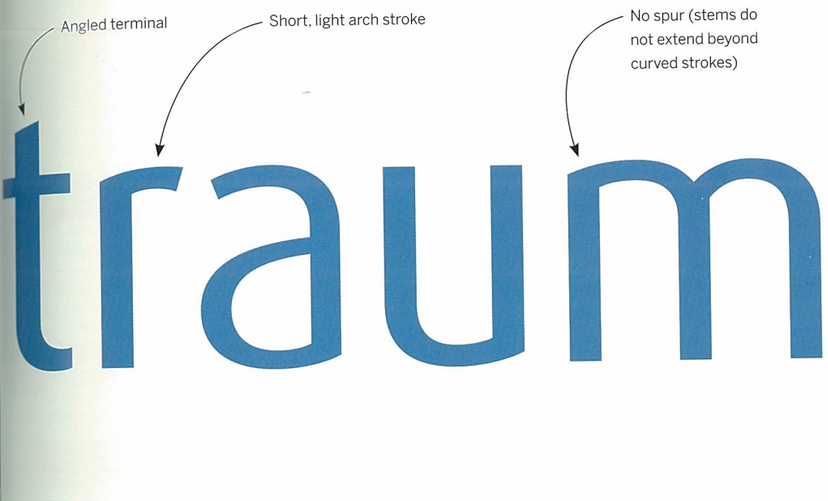
FF Dax ***Regular***



Hans Reichel's goal was to 'combine the clarity of a narrow Futura with a more humanist touch'. The result ventures quite far away from sterile geometry, with its high contrast, elliptical rounds and various letters clearly inspired by handwriting, but remains quite minimal. This simplicity is due in large part to the lack of extending stems (or spurs) on the 'd', 'g', 'm', 'n', 'p', 'q', 'r' and 'u'. It was an idea that Reichel first tried in 1983 with his Barmeno (originally called Barmen), but **FF Dax** popularised the look, influencing the design of countless followers since its 1995 release. The follow-up FF Daxline offers lower contrast, larger caps and more consistent letter widths. It is better suited for Text and is generally more in line with current typographical tastes.

Compare to:

Caengdruo

FF Daxline

FF Balance

Designer: Evert Bloemsma // **Foundry:** FontFont // **Country of origin:** The Netherlands
Release year: 1993 // **Classification:** Neo-Humanist Sans

Terminals sheared almost vertically

Spangolite

Flare at bottom, narrower at spur due to ink trap

No horizontal stroke, arch extends outside of vertical stroke

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abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890 163
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FF Balance Regular

Moderate x-height, extenders, width

Flared terminals

Prominent ink traps, short ascender and heavy tail make for a distinctive 't'

Spangolite

Round shapes are nearly circular

Moderate reversed contrast, horizontal stress axis

Large eye due to squared shape, low bar and mild ink traps

Evert Bloemsma was a remarkable innovator, always questioning conventions and experimenting with new ideas in typeface design. We lost him too soon at the young age of forty-seven. Fortunately, he left us with four inventive and useful designs: **FF Balance**, FF Cocon, FF Avance and FF Legato. Like **Antique Olive**, FF Balance reverses the traditional stress angle, putting weight on the top and bottom of letters instead of the sides. But where Antique Olive forces letters into geometric moulds, FF Balance is more Humanist in structure, and includes imperfect terminals reminiscent of pen strokes. Prominent ink traps allow use in small text. The horizontal emphasis created by the reversed contrast also facilitates reading of longer texts.

Compare to:

Gsegaito

Antique Olive

Gsegaito

Metric

Grotesque Slab

194 **Giza**

196 **Clarendon**

198 Farao

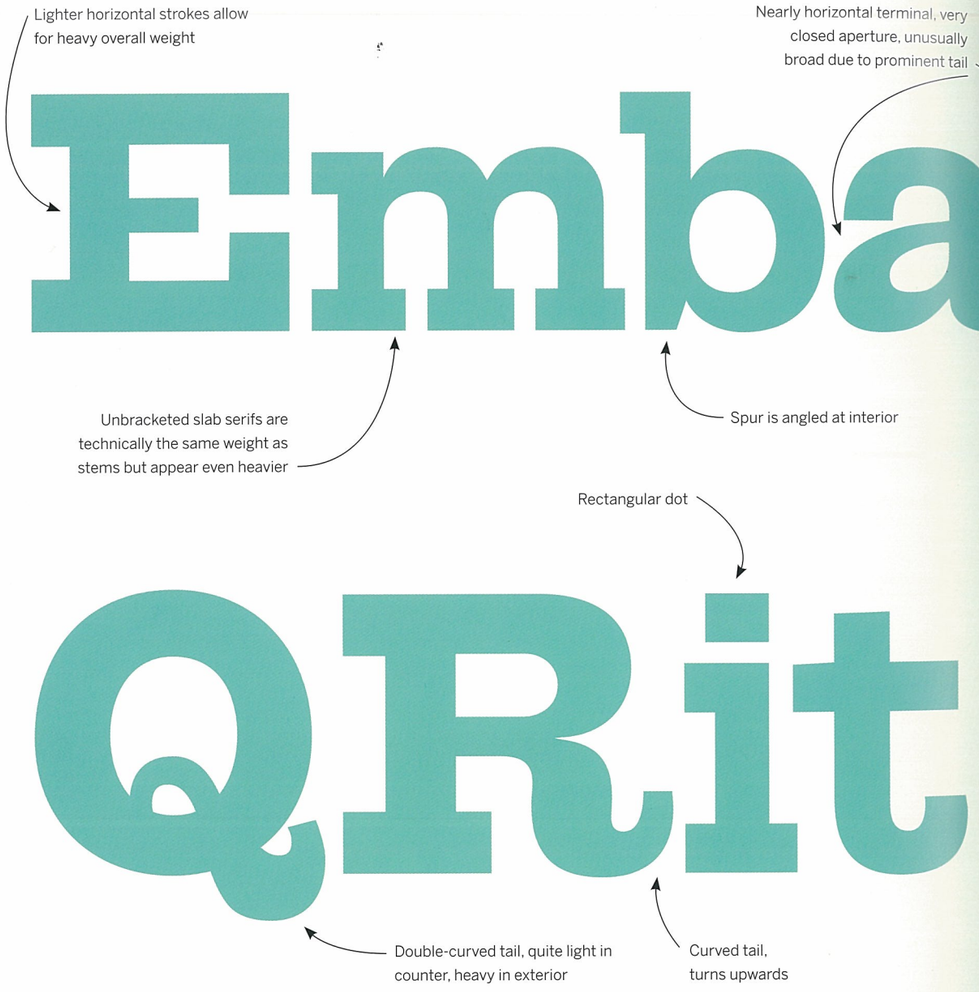
200 Heron Serif

XXXX

Background typefaces are Giza and Farao

Giza

Designer: (Vincent Figgins) David Berlow // **Foundry:** Font Bureau // **Country of origin:** (United Kingdom) United States // **Release year:** (1845) 1994 // **Classification:** Grotesque Slab


Lighter horizontal strokes allow for heavy overall weight
Nearly horizontal terminal, very closed aperture, unusually broad due to prominent tail
Embar
Unbracketed slab serifs are technically the same weight as stems but appear even heavier
Spur is angled at interior
Rectangular dot
QRit
Double-curved tail, quite light in counter, heavy in exterior
Curved tail, turns upwards

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Giza OneFive

Heavy arch turns inwards, ends with flat, nearly horizontal terminal
Very large x-height, short extenders, wide body
Round glyphs are nearly circular, slightly squared
goes
Flat, horizontal terminal, very closed aperture, slight underbite
Minimal contrast (more visible on other glyphs to accommodate weight and serifs), vertical stress

The thunderous, head-turning slab serifs of the Victorian era are the basis for **Giza**. The name comes from what these typefaces were called at the time: 'Egyptian'. Every style in the Giza family is heavy, in typographic terms, but also in its visual impression. One can imagine the effort required to lift a physical representation of these letters. This isn't a compact headliner by any means. Not only is it quite broad, with massive slabs, but there are also prominent tails that need a lot of space to extend from the body and turn upwards. ***Good for:*** Grabbing attention. Occupying a lot of space with a powerful message. Emulating the bolder side of vintage ephemera.

Compare to:

QReagrse

Bureau Grot

QReagrse

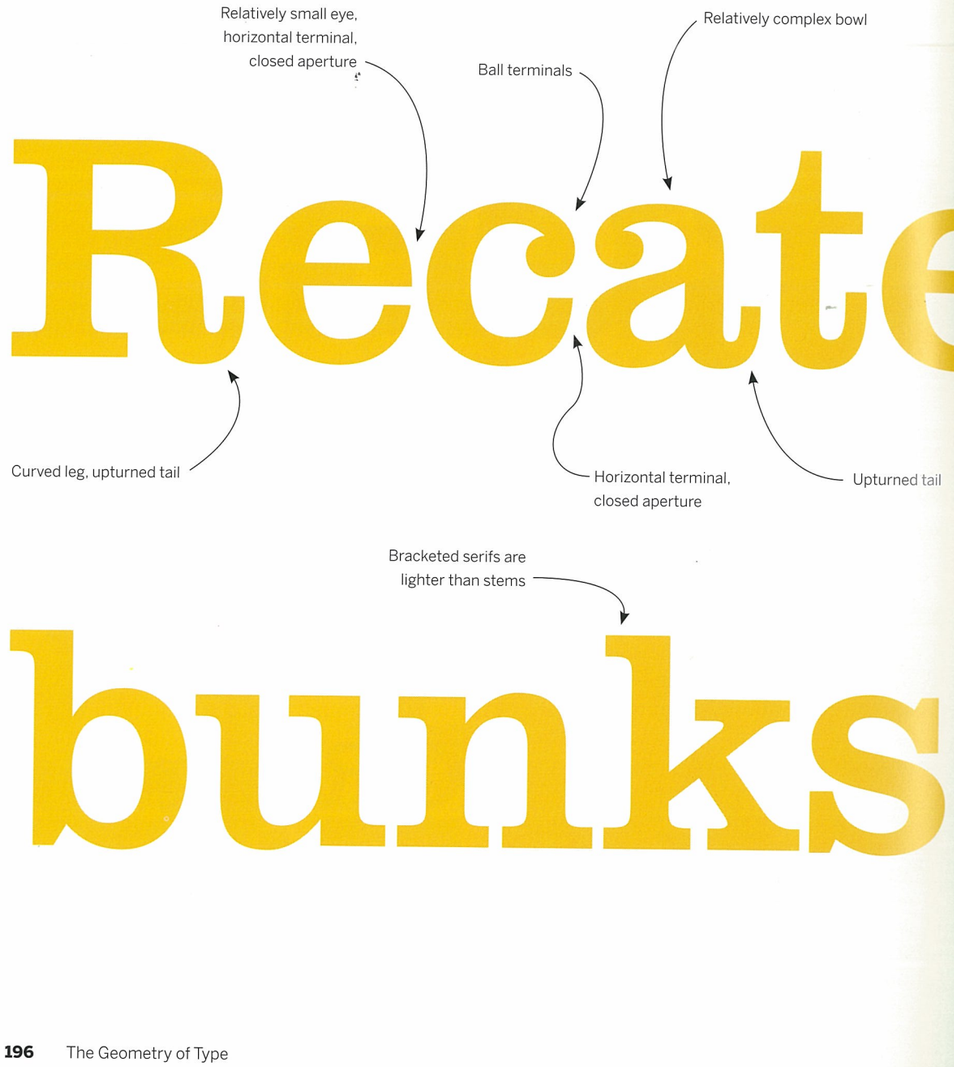
Clarendon

QReagrse

Farao

Clarendon

Designer: (Robert Besley) Hermann Eidenbenz // **Foundry:** (Fann Street Foundry) Haas, Linotype, Monotype, Bitstream
Country of origin: (United Kingdom) Switzerland // **Release year:** (1840s) 1953 // **Classification:** Grotesque Slab



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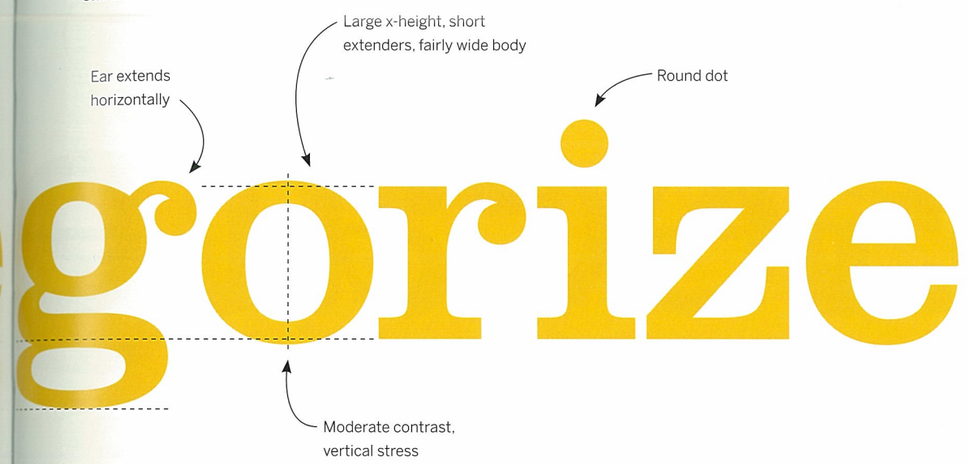
Clarendon Roman


Large x-height, short extenders, fairly wide body
Ear extends horizontally
Round dot
Moderate contrast, vertical stress

When one thinks 'slab serif', **Clarendon** is often the first thing that comes to mind. Its sturdy structure, punctuated by ball terminals, has made it one of the most popular faces of the last fifty years. The versions we know today are generally derived from mid-20th-century modernisations of styles from the early 1800s. Unlike the type that inspired **Giza**, Clarendon has an increased contrast that opens up the counters. This lets it be used for short passages of text. Serifs are also lighter and bracketed – still heavier than a book serif, but less imposing than Giza's. There are a variety of Clarendon alternatives that either improve its readability (**Ingeborg**, **Eames Century Modern**) or enhance its expressive qualities (**Farao**).

Compare to:

Raceyrkg

Helvetica

Raceyrkg

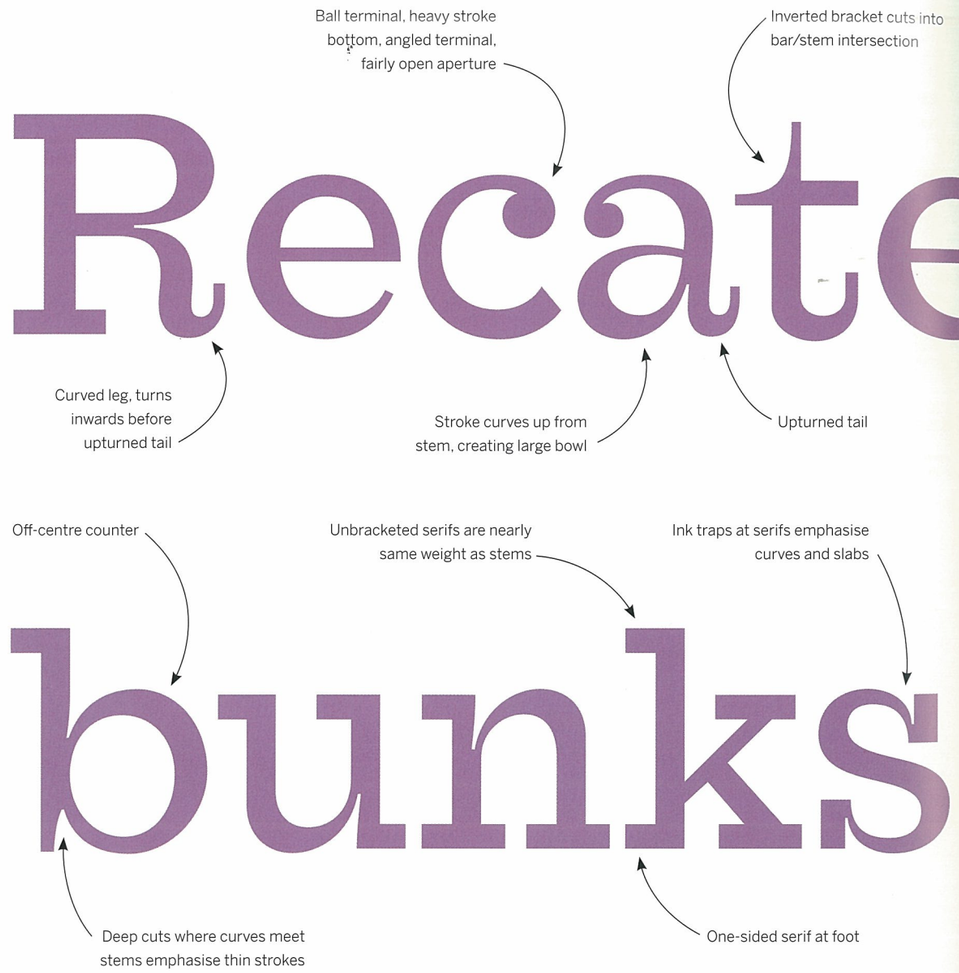
Farao

Raceyrkg

Giza

Farao

Designer: František Štorm // **Foundry:** Storm // **Country of origin:** Czech Republic
Release year: 1998 // **Classification:** Grotesque Slab


Ball terminal, heavy stroke bottom, angled terminal, fairly open aperture
Inverted bracket cuts into bar/stem intersection
Recategorize
Curved leg, turns inwards before upturned tail
Stroke curves up from stem, creating large bowl
Upturned tail
Off-centre counter
Unbracketed serifs are nearly same weight as stems
Ink traps at serifs emphasise curves and slabs
bunks
Deep cuts where curves meet stems emphasise thin strokes
One-sided serif at foot

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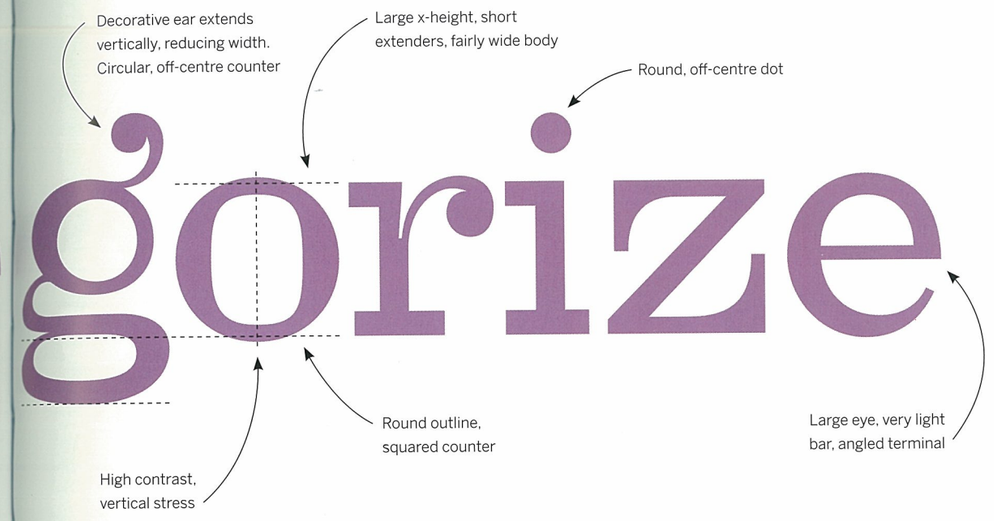
Farao Regular


Decorative ear extends vertically, reducing width. Circular, off-centre counter
Large x-height, short extenders, fairly wide body
Round, off-centre dot
Recategorize
High contrast, vertical stress
Round outline, squared counter
Large eye, very light bar, angled terminal

Czech type designer František Štorm has made a habit of infusing historical styles with his own eccentric brand of expression. His **Farao** is a perfect example. Most modern interpretations of **Clarendon** and other *Egyptians* are somewhat cold and calculated. Štorm went back to their ancestors – the uneven, untamed type of the 19th century – and celebrated its imperfections. Farao has exaggerated ball terminals and serifs, inconsistent contrast and a potpourri of seemingly incompatible features. Yet it all comes together in a wonderful, sparkling typeface full of humour and life. This is Clarendon let loose. ***Good for:*** A wink and a smile and a nod to the past.

Compare to:

Raceyrkg

Clarendon

Raceyrkg

Giza OneFive

Heron Serif

Designer: Cyrus Highsmith // **Foundry:** Font Bureau // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 2012 // **Classification:** Grotesque Slab

Unbracketed serifs are same weight as stems
Square dot
Angled terminal with large, flat-topped bowl
this Gargoyle
Flat tail rests on baseline
Beardless 'G'
Large bowl occupies more than half of body
RAM
Straight leg extends from curve of bowl with serif on both sides of leg
Asymmetrical serifs reduce width of 'A', compensating for space around top of glyph

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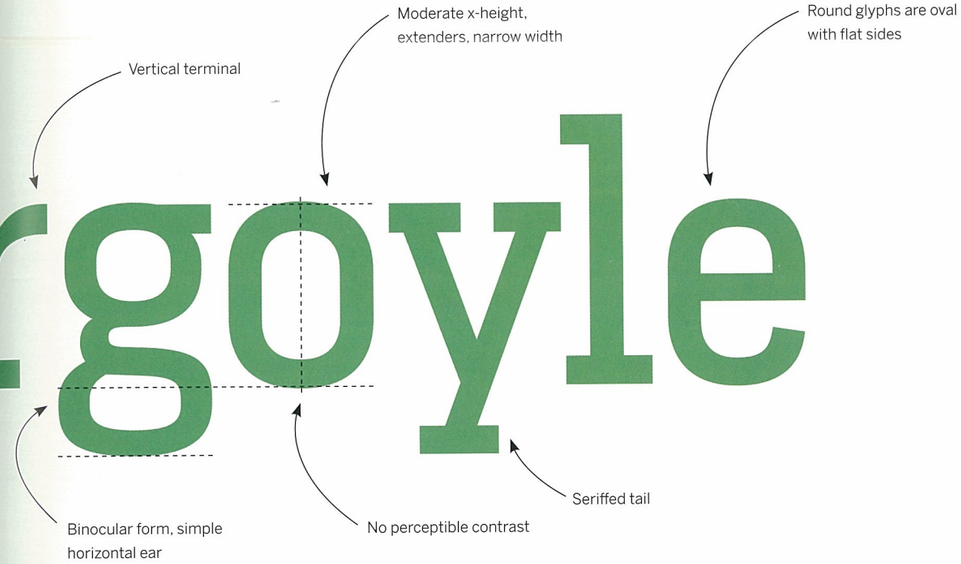
Heron Serif Regular



Heron Serif is a strong, no-nonsense, hard-nosed typeface ready to go to work. There is a solid monolinear quality to every weight and style – even the bold keeps this feeling, as it lacks the increased stroke contrast that sometimes makes an otherwise stoic face appear somewhat friendly, even whimsical. Still, Heron is not cold: if DIN is a German number-cruncher – a stickler for rules and regulations while devoid of personality – Heron is an American steelworker, tough as nails and steadfast on the job, but loose enough to get a little dirty and tell a tall tale. Created by Cyrus Highsmith specifically for publications, Heron Serif has twenty styles, various alternative glyphs (like a tailed 'l', stemless 'u' and single-storey 'a' and 'g') and a sans companion.

Compare to:

Gesgak

Adelle

Gesgak

FF DIN

Geometric Slab

204 Archer

206 Neutraface Slab

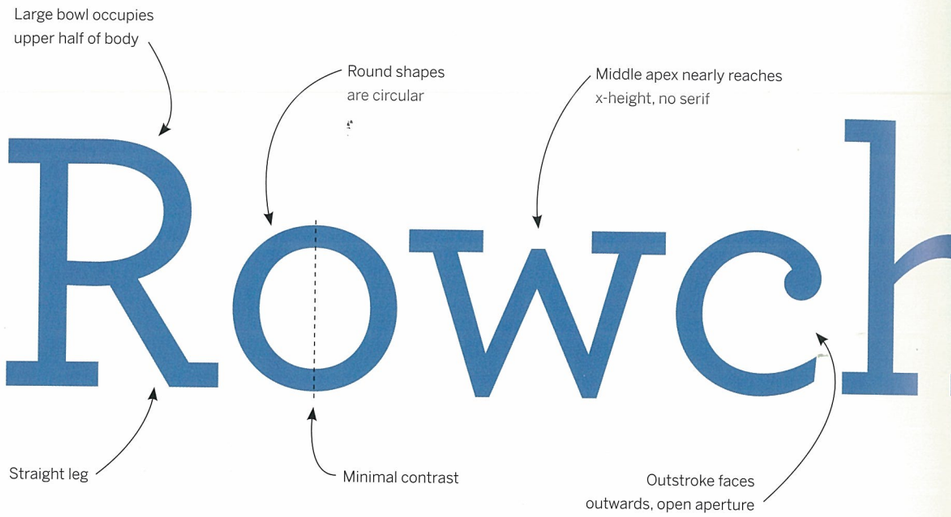
208 **Rockwell**

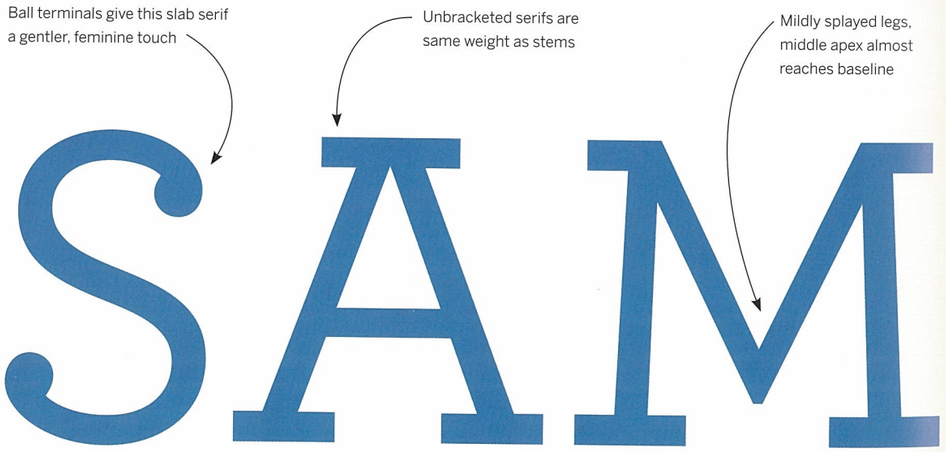
XXX

Background typefaces are Archer and Rockwell

Archer

Designer: H&FJ staff // **Foundry:** Hoefler & Frere-Jones // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 2008 // **Classification:** Geometric Slab


Large bowl occupies upper half of body
Round shapes are circular
Middle apex nearly reaches x-height, no serif
Straight leg
Minimal contrast
Outstroke faces outwards, open aperture


Ball terminals give this slab serif a gentler, feminine touch
Unbracketed serifs are same weight as stems
Mildly splayed legs, middle apex almost reaches baseline

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abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890 163

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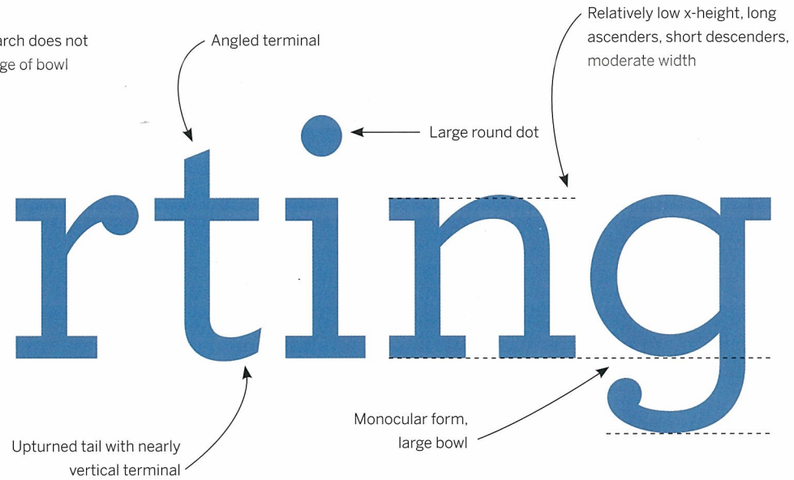
Archer Medium


Fairly short arch does not reach left edge of bowl
Angled terminal
Relatively low x-height, long ascenders, short descenders, moderate width
Large round dot
Upturned tail with nearly vertical terminal
Monocular form, large bowl

Most Geometric slabs are cold and rigid, but **Archer** has a sweet, almost dainty nature. The main contributors to its complexion are the small ball terminals that frequently occur, even on the 's', a letter that rarely gets that treatment (see also **Filosofia**). But Archer also feels approachable because it avoids the monotony of other Geometrics. The legs of the 'M' are mildly angled rather than rigidly vertical. The 'c' and 'e' end in an outwards stroke rather than closing in a tight circle. The relatively low x-height of Archer also gives it a more gentle, antique touch. Like most H&FJ families, Archer is packed with weights and features for complex typesetting. ***Good for:*** Informal but proper announcements. Facts and figures with a positive slant. Cookbooks.

Compare to:

Swgfacroi

Neutraface Slab Text

Swgfacroi

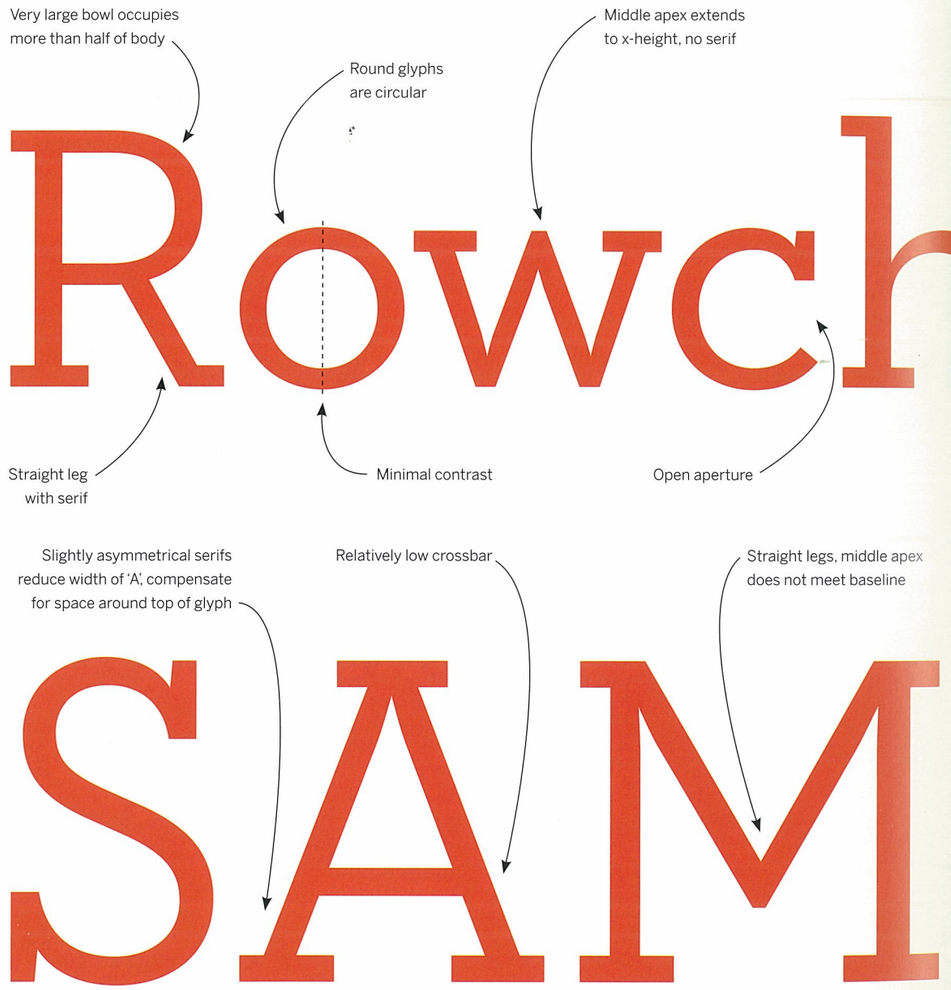
Rockwell

Swgfacroi

PNM Caecilia 55

Neutraface Slab

Designer: Kai Bernau, Susana Carvalho, Christian Schwartz, Ken Barber // **Foundry:** House Industries
Country of origin: United States, The Netherlands // **Release year:** 2009 // **Classification:** Geometric Slab


Very large bowl occupies more than half of body
Round glyphs are circular
Middle apex extends to x-height, no serif
Straight leg with serif
Minimal contrast
Open aperture
Slightly asymmetrical serifs reduce width of 'A', compensate for space around top of glyph
Relatively low crossbar
Straight legs, middle apex does not meet baseline
Rowcharting
SAM

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890 163

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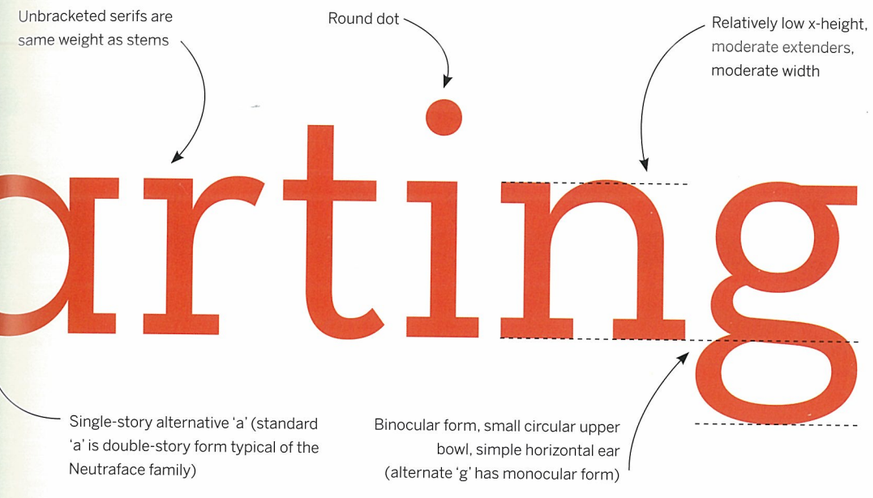
Neutraface Slab Text Book


Unbracketed serifs are same weight as stems
Round dot
Relatively low x-height, moderate extenders, moderate width
Rowcharting
Single-story alternative 'a' (standard 'a' is double-story form typical of the Neutraface family)
Binocular form, small circular upper bowl, simple horizontal ear (alternate 'g' has monocular form)

In 2002, Christian Schwartz and House Industries released **Neutraface**, a Geometric sans serif inspired by the architectural lettering of celebrated modernist architect Richard Neutra. It is a more nuanced take on **Futura**, along the lines of **Avenir**. It became one of the most successful releases of the decade. It made sense, from both a marketing and design point of view, to give it a seriffed counterpart. Designed by Kai Bernau and Susana Carvalho under Schwartz's direction, Neutraface Slab has a similar build to **Archer**, but is clearly more serious. Still, it avoids the strict geometry of faces like Memphis and Stymie, allowing it to set surprisingly readable text. ***Good for:*** A reference to the crisper, more European side of mid-century modernism.

Compare to:

GMRcaogs

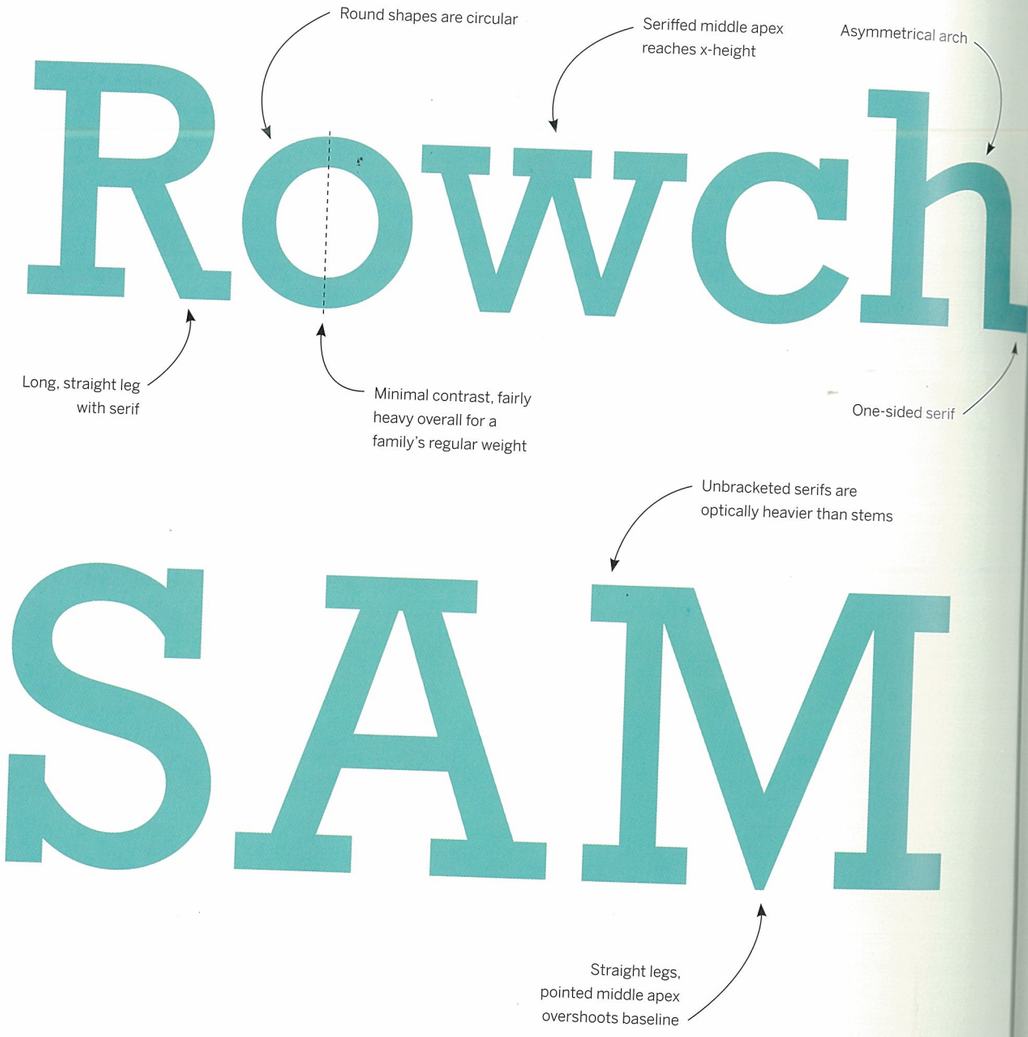
Rockwell

GMRcaogs

Archer

Rockwell

Designer: Monotype staff // **Foundry:** Lanston Monotype Corporation, Monotype Imaging // **Country of origin:** United States
Release years: 1933–1934 // **Classification:** Geometric Slab


Round shapes are circular
Seriffed middle apex reaches x-height
Asymmetrical arch
Rowcharting
Long, straight leg with serif
Minimal contrast, fairly heavy overall for a family's regular weight
One-sided serif
Unbracketed serifs are optically heavier than stems
SAM
Straight legs, pointed middle apex overshoots baseline

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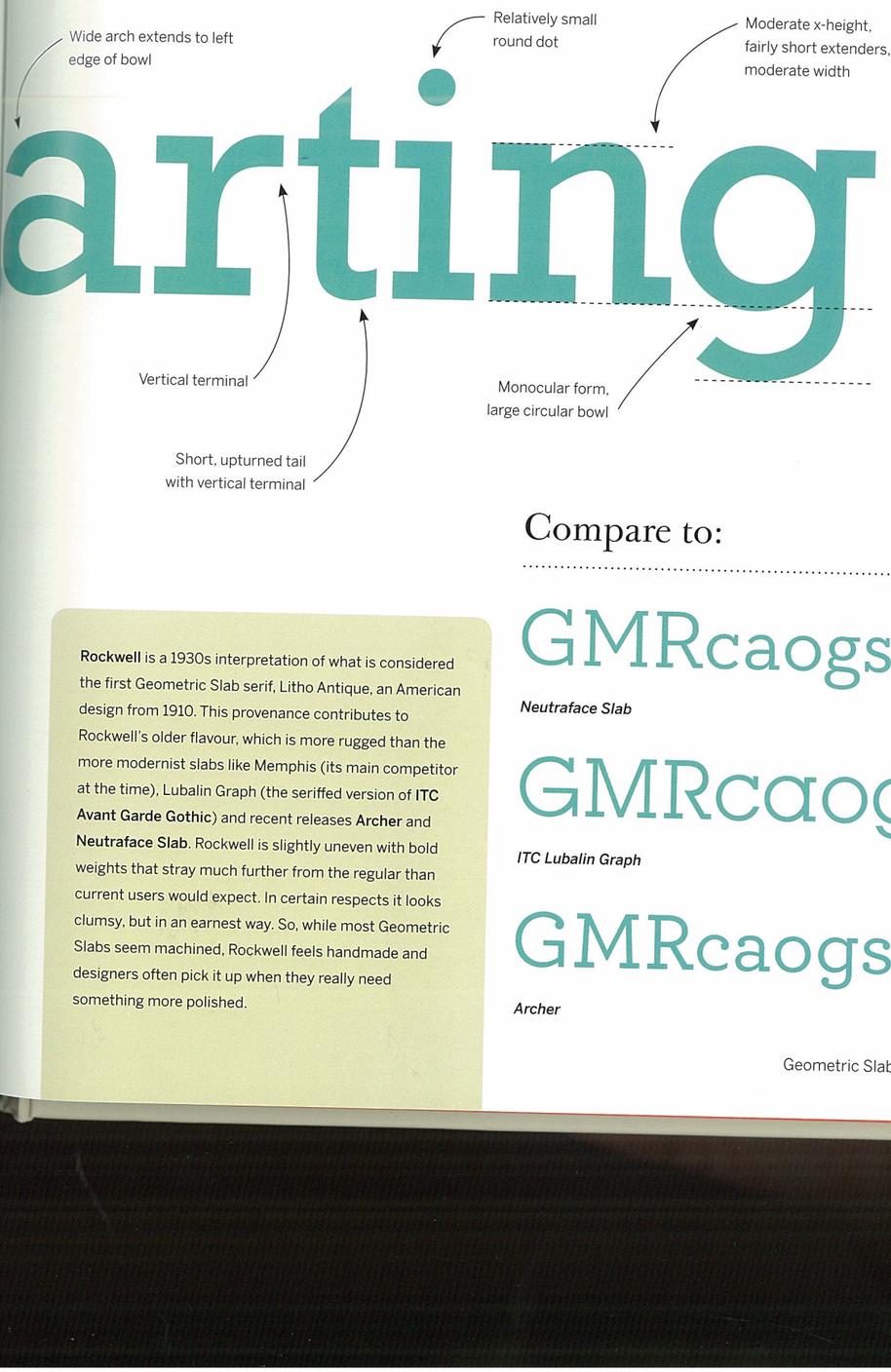
Rockwell Regular


Wide arch extends to left edge of bowl
Relatively small round dot
Moderate x-height, fairly short extenders, moderate width
Rowcharting
Vertical terminal
Short, upturned tail with vertical terminal
Monocular form, large circular bowl

Rockwell is a 1930s interpretation of what is considered the first Geometric Slab serif, Litho Antique, an American design from 1910. This provenance contributes to Rockwell's older flavour, which is more rugged than the more modernist slabs like Memphis (its main competitor at the time), Lubalin Graph (the seriffed version of **ITC Avant Garde Gothic**) and recent releases **Archer** and **Neutraface Slab**. Rockwell is slightly uneven with bold weights that stray much further from the regular than current users would expect. In certain respects it looks clumsy, but in an earnest way. So, while most Geometric Slabs seem machined, Rockwell feels handmade and designers often pick it up when they really need something more polished.

Compare to:

GMRcaogs

Neutraface Slab

GMRcaogs

ITC Lubalin Graph

GMRcaogs

Archer

Humanist Slab

212 PMN Caecilia

214 FF Unit Slab

216 Adelle

218 Freight Micro

XXXx

Background typefaces are Freight Micro and Adelle

PMN Caecilia

Designer: Peter Matthias Noordzij // **Foundry:** Linotype // **Country of origin:** The Netherlands, Germany
Release year: 1990 // **Classification:** Humanist Slab

Slight contrast, angled stress
Ink trap cut into stem follows arch stroke
Wide arch extends to left edge of bowl, bowl stroke starts horizontally
Persagentschap
Binocular form with simple horizontal ear
Round dots
Arm and leg meet at stem
Rijk
Curved leg
Long, slow curve

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abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890
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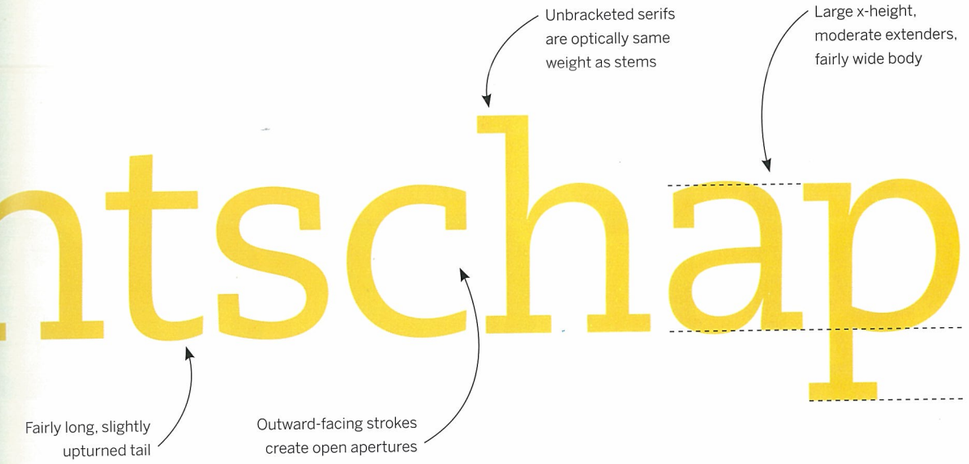
PMN Caecilia 55 Roman


Unbracketed serifs are optically same weight as stems
Large x-height, moderate extenders, fairly wide body
Fairly long, slightly upturned tail
Outward-facing strokes create open apertures

Designed by Peter Matthias Noordzij (and named after his wife), **PMN Caecilia** is among the most readable of slab serifs. Its structure is very Humanist, and as close as a slab comes to an old-style book face. The difference is very little stroke contrast and unbracketed, rectangular serifs that nearly match stems in weight. These characteristics are very well suited for long texts on coarse resolution displays, and that's exactly why Amazon chose it as the default face for their Kindle. PMN Caecilia also has a very pleasant, inviting quality, delivering text without pretension. ***Good for:*** Books on low-res screens or in poor printing conditions. Professional but approachable text.

Compare to:

Rgspya
TheSerif

Rgspya
Adelle

Rgspya
Archer

FF Unit Slab

Designer: Christian Schwartz, Erik Spiekermann, Kris Sowersby // **Foundry:** FontFont // **Country of origin:** United States, Germany, New Zealand // **Release year:** 2009 // **Classification:** Humanist/Grotesque Slab

Large eye, fairly large counter
Blunt, wedge-shaped serifs
Uncommon 'U' with stem
Round glyphs are slightly squared ovals
Moderate contrast, vertical stress
Arm and leg meet without touching stem
Large bowl occupies half of body
Slightly curved leg meets bowl near stem

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890 163

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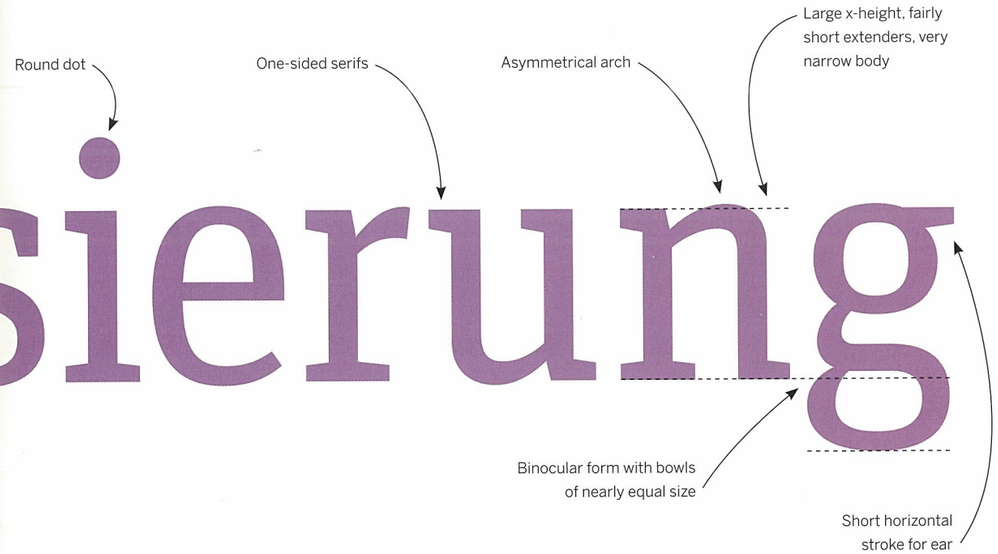
FF Unit Slab Regular


Round dot
One-sided serifs
Asymmetrical arch
Large x-height, fairly short extenders, very narrow body
Binocular form with bowls of nearly equal size
Short horizontal stroke for ear

The compact FF Unit, described by FontFont as '**FF Meta**'s grown-up, no-nonsense sister', was released in 2003 as a regimented alternative to Erik Spiekermann's famous typeface. Later, as Spiekermann and Christian Schwartz were working on **FF Meta Serif**, they also developed **FF Unit Slab**. It's a fitting companion to FF Unit, with thick, wedge-shaped slabs that maintain FF Unit's business-like demeanour without making it too stiff or mechanical. Thanks to their concurrent development, the two serifs can work together, along with either of their sans serif counterparts. ***Good for:*** Saving space without losing legibility. An unconventional typographic hierarchy combining serif and slab, in lieu of serif and sans. Twenty-first-century business.

Compare to:

UKRbagomk

Adelle

UKRbagomk

Heron Serif

Adelle

Designer: Veronika Burian, José Scaglione // **Foundry:** TypeTogether // **Country of origin:** Czech Republic, Argentina
Release year: 2009 // **Classification:** Humanist/Grotesque Slab

Serifless middle apex does not reach cap height. Asymmetrical serifs reduce width
Terminal serif
Wisecracking
Large bowl
Slightly squared, nearly circular
Prominent downturned arch stroke
Rolf
Nearly straight leg with two-sided serif
Minimal contrast
Extended bar and serif balance arch stroke

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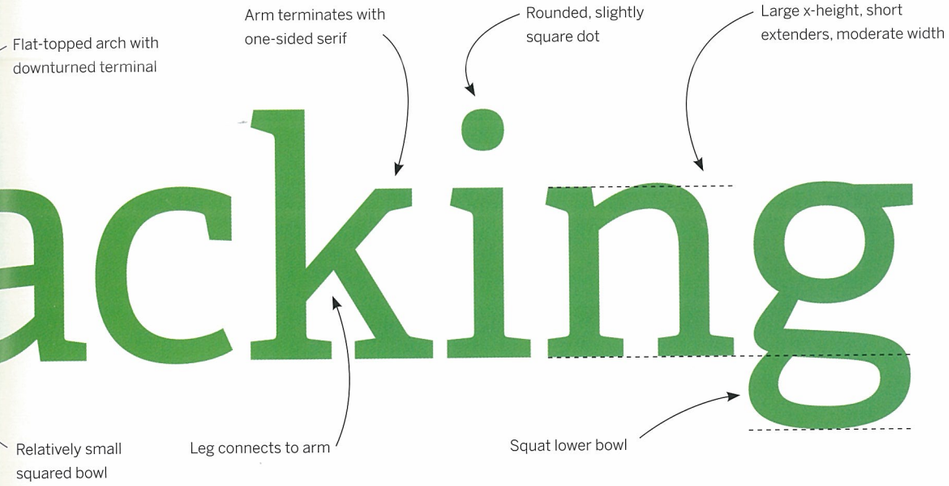
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz Thctchckst
1234567890 163 ¼ ⅔ ⅝ [àóüßç](.,:;?!$£&-*){ÀÓÜÇ}

Adelle Regular


Flat-topped arch with downturned terminal
Arm terminates with one-sided serif
Rounded, slightly square dot
Large x-height, short extenders, moderate width
Relatively small squared bowl
Leg connects to arm
Squat lower bowl

Released in late 2009, **Adelle** is one of the newest entries in the Humanist Slab category. In some ways, though, Adelle is as much a Grotesque, with bones that echo the early sans serifs, especially visible in the squarish 'a', 'o' and 'f', and the leg of the 'R.' But this is a contemporary design in nearly every other respect, from its lack of contrast to its wide-open apertures and wedge serifs. A sans serif companion was recently added, increasing Adelle's versatility. ***Good for:*** Informal publications, particularly those published on unforgiving paper or the internet.

Compare to:

MREacgrks

PMN Caecelia

MREacgrks

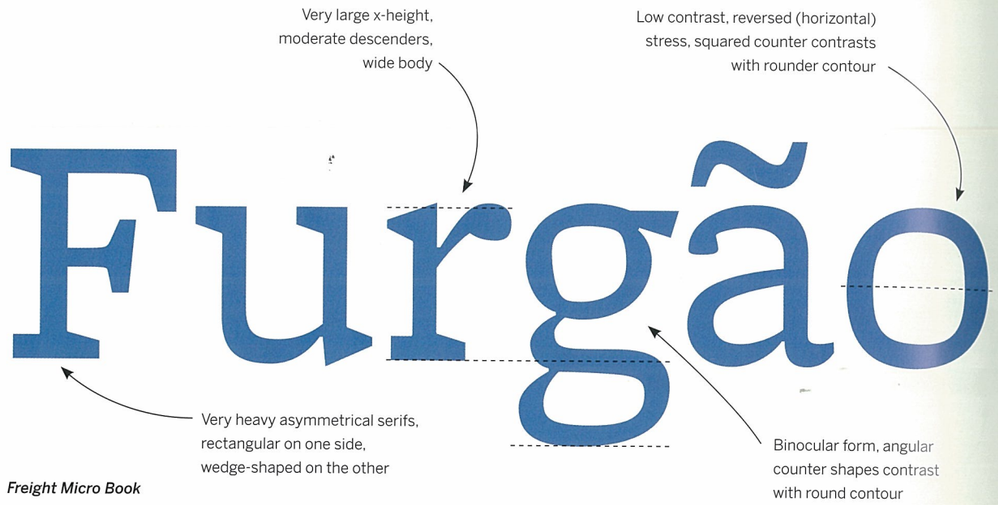
TheSerif

MREacgrks

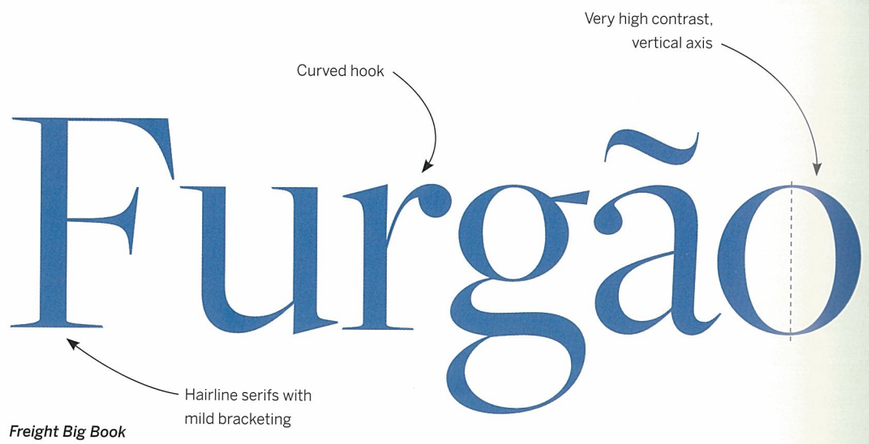
FF Unit Slab

Freight Micro

Designer: Joshua Darden // **Foundry:** GarageFonts // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 2004 // **Classification:** Humanist Slab/Serif


Very large x-height, moderate descenders, wide body
Low contrast, reversed (horizontal) stress, squared counter contrasts with rounder contour
Furgão
Very heavy asymmetrical serifs, rectangular on one side, wedge-shaped on the other
Binocular form, angular counter shapes contrast with round contour

Freight Micro Book



Freight Big Book

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890 163

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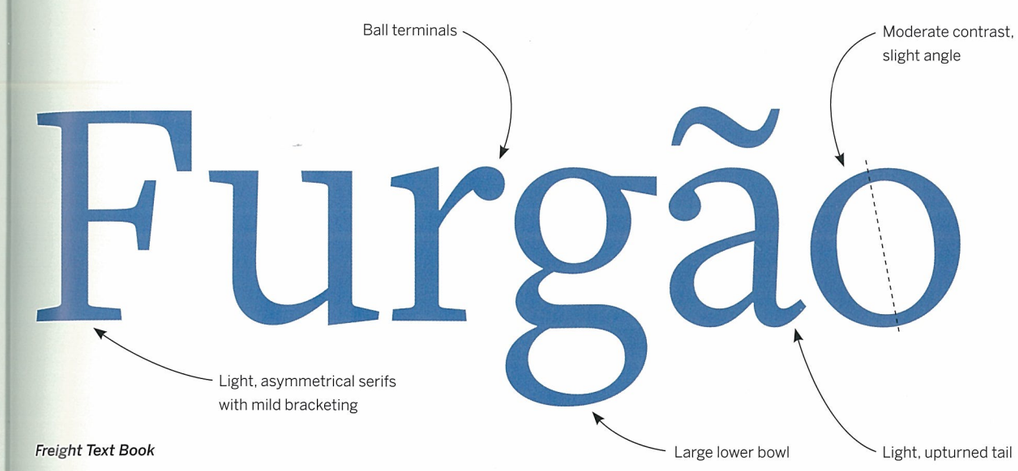
Freight Micro Book



Freight Text Book

With Freight, Joshua Darden follows in the footsteps of Adobe and others who are championing a return to the size-specific designs that were a given in metal typefounding. Freight Text, Display and Big are typical optical size masters, adjusting contrast and proportion to fit the needs of various settings, whether small text or large titling. But **Freight Micro** is in a very different boat. Rather than relying merely on ink traps (see **Bell Centennial**), Darden solved the problems of tiny type by modulating entire strokes and contours, opening counters while making serifs more robust. The result is a very unusual design that really works (even on screen), but also makes for intriguing Display type of its own. ***Good for:*** Legible text. Eye-catching headlines.

Compare to:

GRFgraoes

Adelle

GRFgraoes

Fedra Serif A

GRFgraoes

FF Clifford Six

Script

222 Kinescope

224 Studio Slant

226 Radio

228 Bickham Script

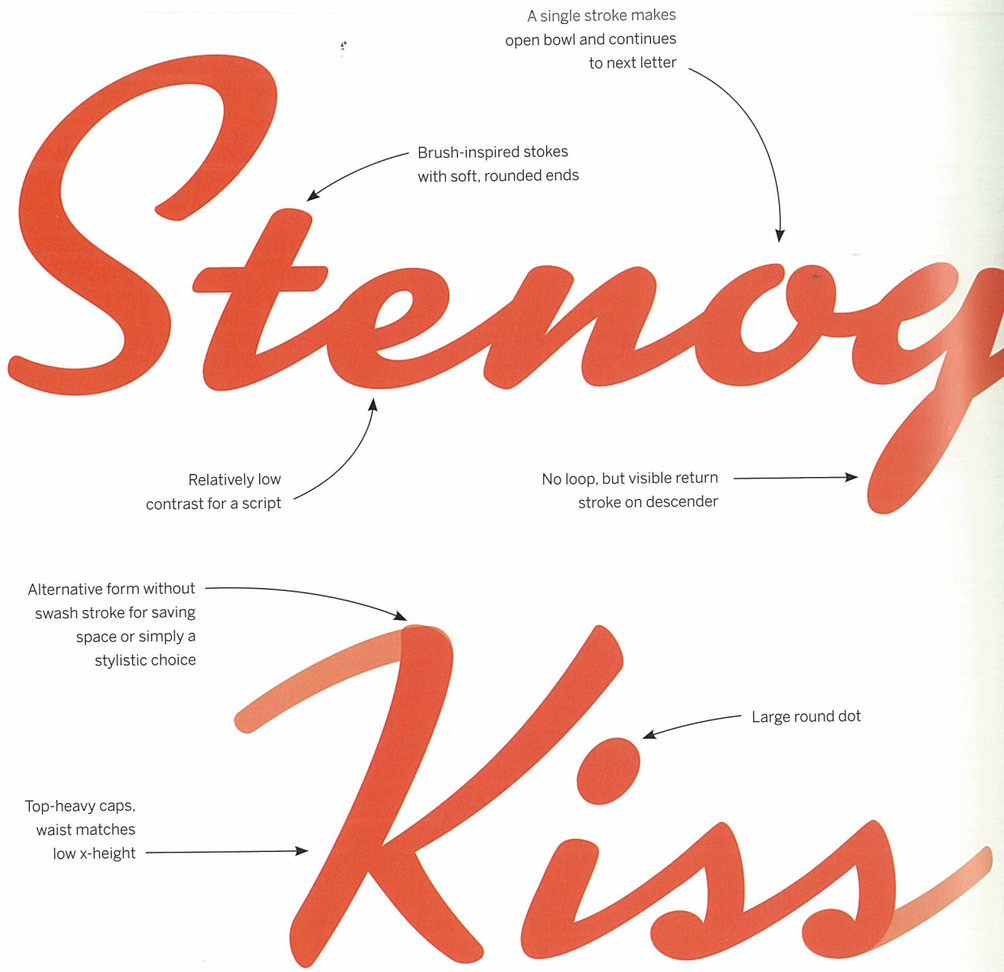
230 Tangier

232 Suomi Hand Script

Background typefaces are Radio and Studio Slant

Kinescope

Designer: Mark Simonson // **Foundry:** Mark Simonson // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 2007 // **Classification:** Casual Script


A single stroke makes open bowl and continues to next letter
Brush-inspired stokes with soft, rounded ends
Relatively low contrast for a script
No loop, but visible return stroke on descender
Stenographer
Alternative form without swash stroke for saving space or simply a stylistic choice
Large round dot
Top-heavy caps, waist matches low x-height
Kiss

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890

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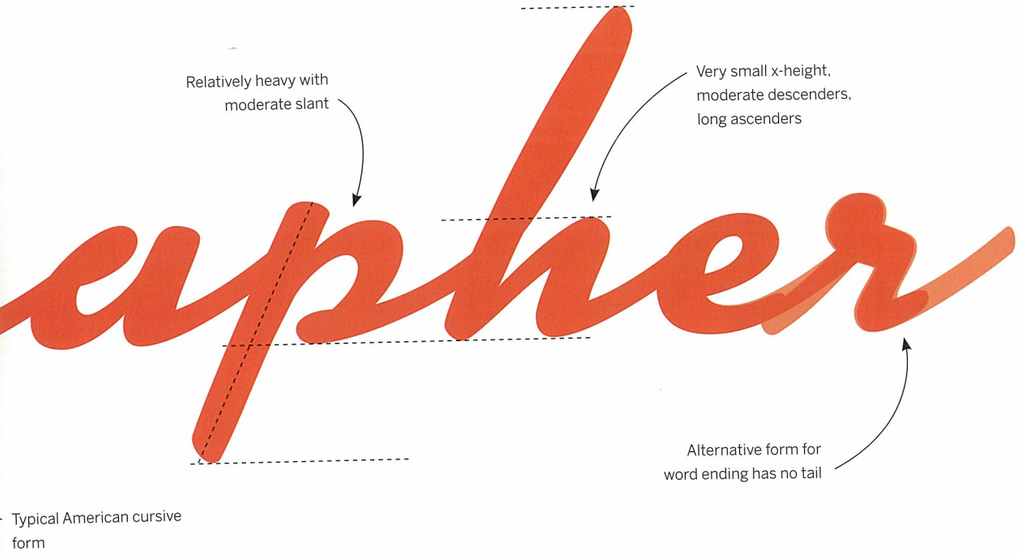
Kinescope Regular


Relatively heavy with moderate slant
Very small x-height, moderate descenders, long ascenders
Alternative form for word ending has no tail
Typical American cursive form

Hand-lettered scripts were once a mainstay of advertising, signage, packaging and chrome emblems. Writing with a brush or pen was simply the best way to make connected letters. Then came phototypesetting in the 1960s–70s, and digital publishing in the 1980s. Over time, most of that custom lettering was replaced with script typefaces – and, unfortunately, most of them are a poor substitute. That's why well-crafted fonts like **Kinescope** are welcome relief. Inspired by a title card from a 1940s-era cartoon, Mark Simonson engages the power of OpenType substitution to successfully emulate a lettering artist's strokes. ***Good for:*** Retro logos and signage. Take caution: the heavy weight and low x-height doesn't allow for anything too small.

Compare to:

Segrsep

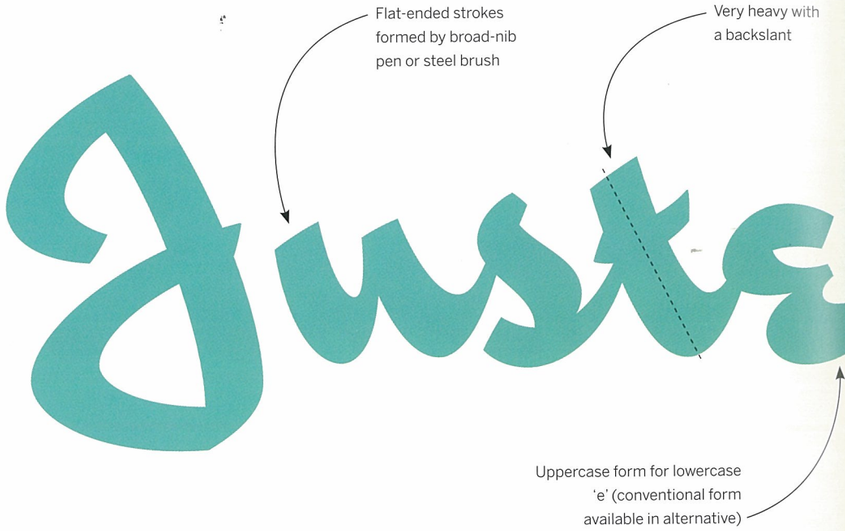
Brush Script

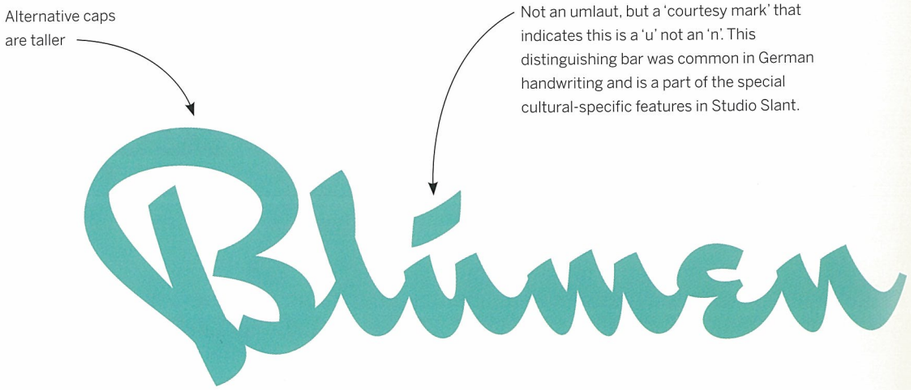
Segrsep

Kaufmann

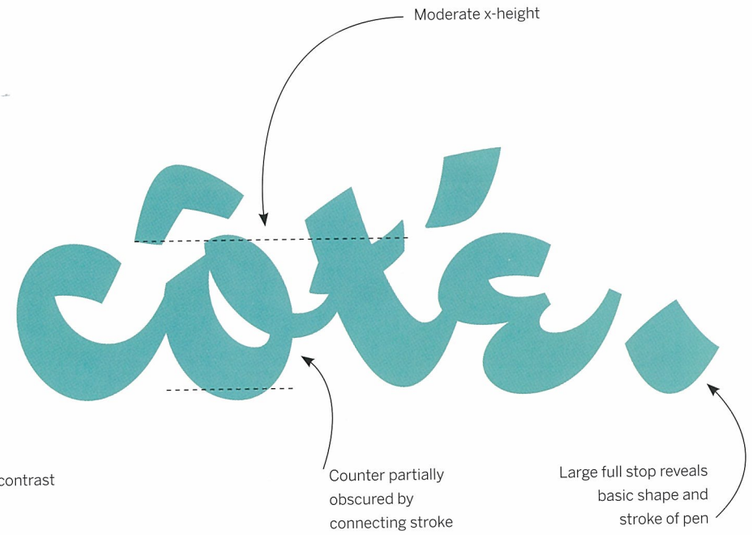
Studio Slant

Designer: Ken Barber, Tal Leming // **Foundry:** House Industries // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 2008 // **Classification:** Casual Script


Flat-ended strokes formed by broad-nib pen or steel brush
Very heavy with a backslant
Uppercase form for lowercase 'e' (conventional form available in alternative)
Juste à côté.


Alternative caps are taller
Not an umlaut, but a 'courtesy mark' that indicates this is a 'u' not an 'n'. This distinguishing bar was common in German handwriting and is a part of the special cultural-specific features in Studio Slant.
Blümen

Studio Slant


Moderate x-height
Juste à côté.
High contrast
Counter partially obscured by connecting stroke
Large full stop reveals basic shape and stroke of pen

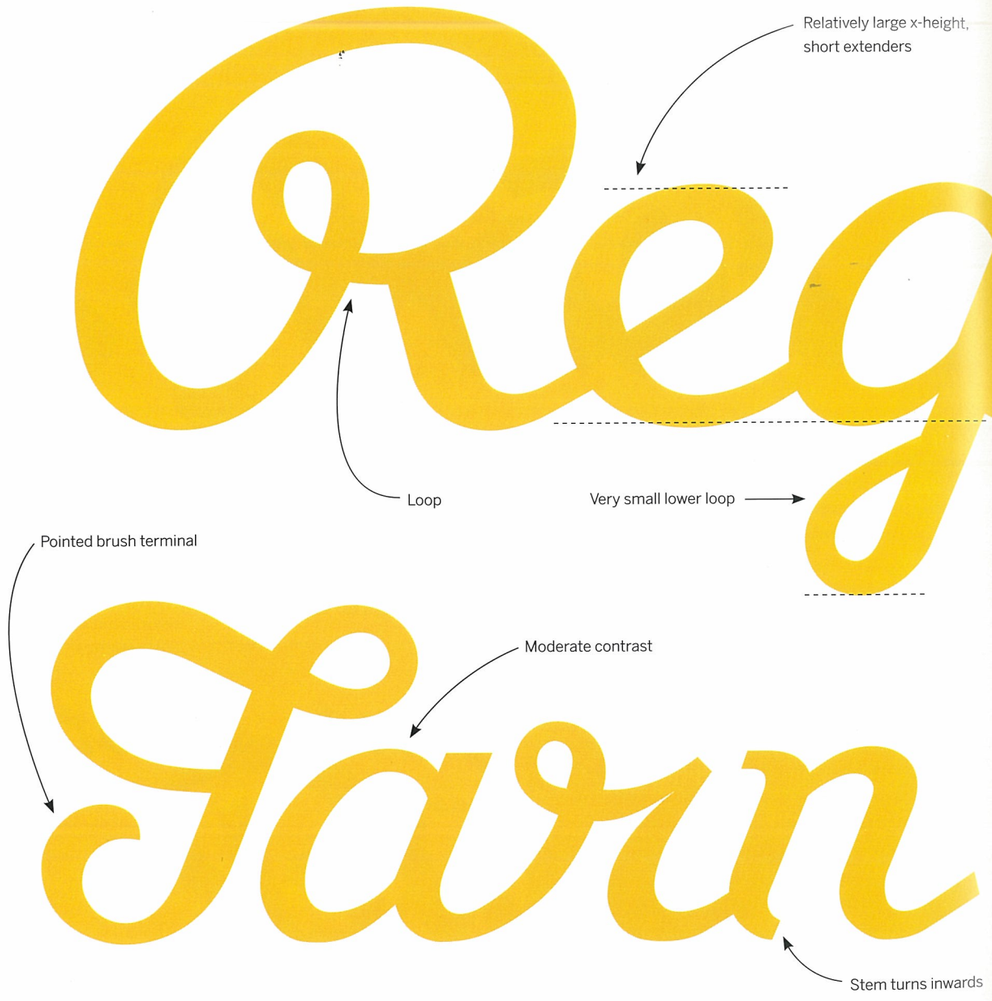
Most scripts lean forward, a few are upright, but those that slant backwards are quite rare. They were actually not so unusual in the 1930s–60s, a period that is a constant muse for House Industries type designer Ken Barber. His **Studio Slant** is a hefty thing, 'written' with a steel 'brush' pen or chisel brush, but quite nimble and vigorous despite its weight. The script is part of a three-font package that celebrates the golden age of hand lettering. Each has the requisite ligatures and alternates for authentic simulation, but also includes 'culture-specific character sets that reflect stylistic preferences of native users'. This is more than a cute gimmick – it addresses the problem that some forms of handwritten letters can be illegible to foreign readers.

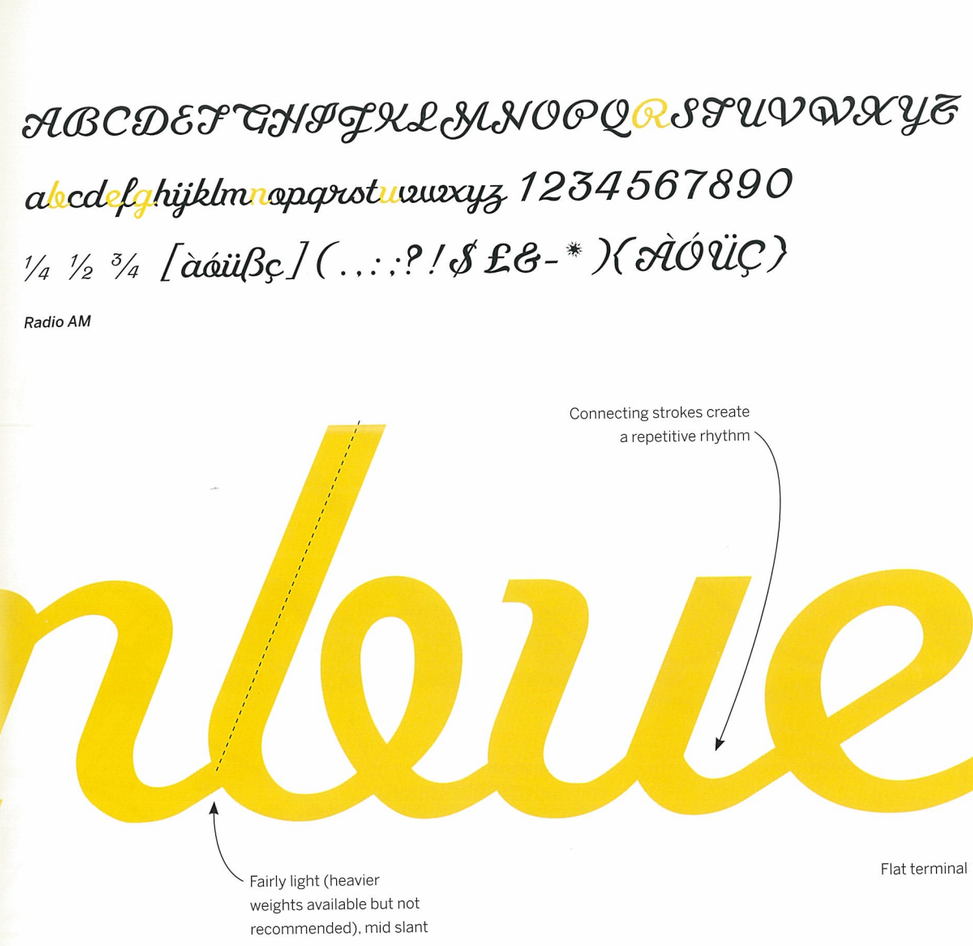
Compare to:

Brush Script

Radio

Designer: Magnus Rakeng // **Foundry:** Village Constellation // **Country of origin:** Norway, United States
Release year: 1998 // **Classification:** Formal Script




Connecting strokes create a repetitive rhythm
Fairly light (heavier weights available but not recommended), mid slant
Flat terminal

Radio AM

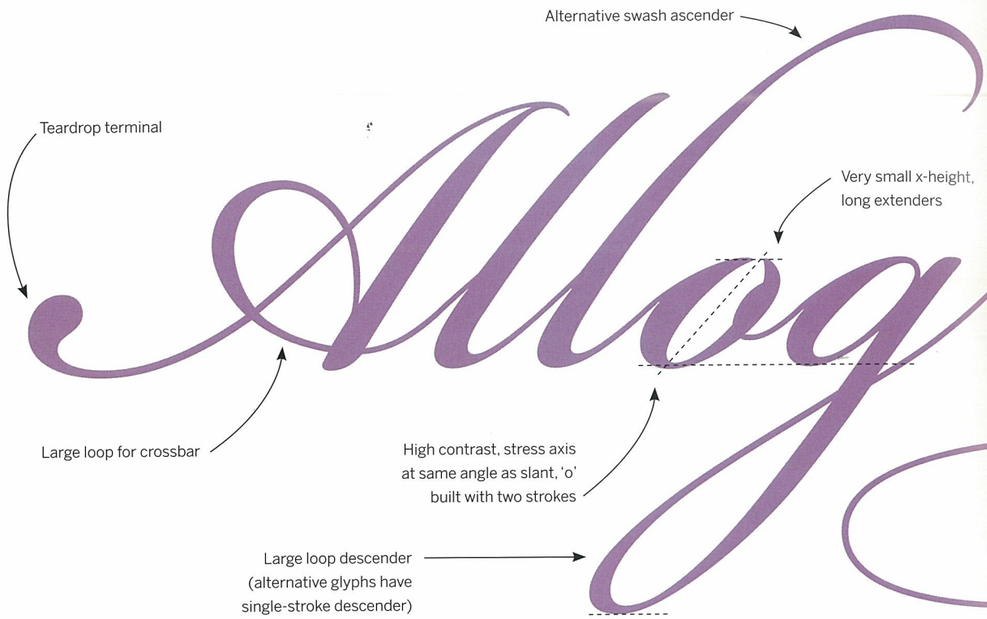
Magnus Rakeng's **Radio** is one of the first digital fonts to hearken back to the hand-drawn scripts of yesteryear, and it's still one of the most unique and (poorly) imitated. Perhaps its originality comes from its mix of sources. As Rakeng puts it, 'Radio has its roots in American commerce, old Norwegian design, rosemaling (decorative folk painting) and a dash of Viking art'. The drawback to Radio's early arrival on the scene was that it missed out on technological advancements, such as OpenType's contextual substitution, that improve a script's natural flow. Users will inevitably hit letter combinations in Radio that simply don't work. Still, there are such beautiful shapes here that we hope readers will join the chorus in demanding an update.

Compare to:

Studio Slant

Bickham Script

Designer: Richard Lipton // **Foundry:** Adobe // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 2000 // **Classification:** Formal Script


Alternative swash ascender
Teardrop terminal
Very small x-height, long extenders
Large loop for crossbar
High contrast, stress axis at same angle as slant, 'o' built with two strokes
Large loop descender (alternative glyphs have single-stroke descender)
Allographs

Various alternatives for every letter offer stylistic variety or optimal forms for specific placement, such as swashes to begin and end words

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abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890

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Bickham Script Regular

Large loop ascender (alternative glyphs offer various ascender types, including exuberant swashes)
Descender is down- and return-stroke (alternative glyphs have single stroke)
Allographs

One of the earliest fonts to fully take advantage of automatic alternative-glyph and ligature substitution, **Bickham Script** is the formal script that other digital attempts are inevitably compared to. Richard Lipton, a fine calligrapher in his own right, based the typeface on the engravings of its 18th-century namesake, George Bickham. As a typical 'copperplate script', Bickham has grand, sweeping strokes with very fine hairlines. This is a typeface that needs lots of space to work its magic (for more a more compact option, see **Tangier**). Extra glyphs, with entry or exit swashes and alternative descenders, let the user customise Bickham's level of expression. A big bundle of underline and separator flourishes are useful for extra embellishment.

Compare to:

Allographs

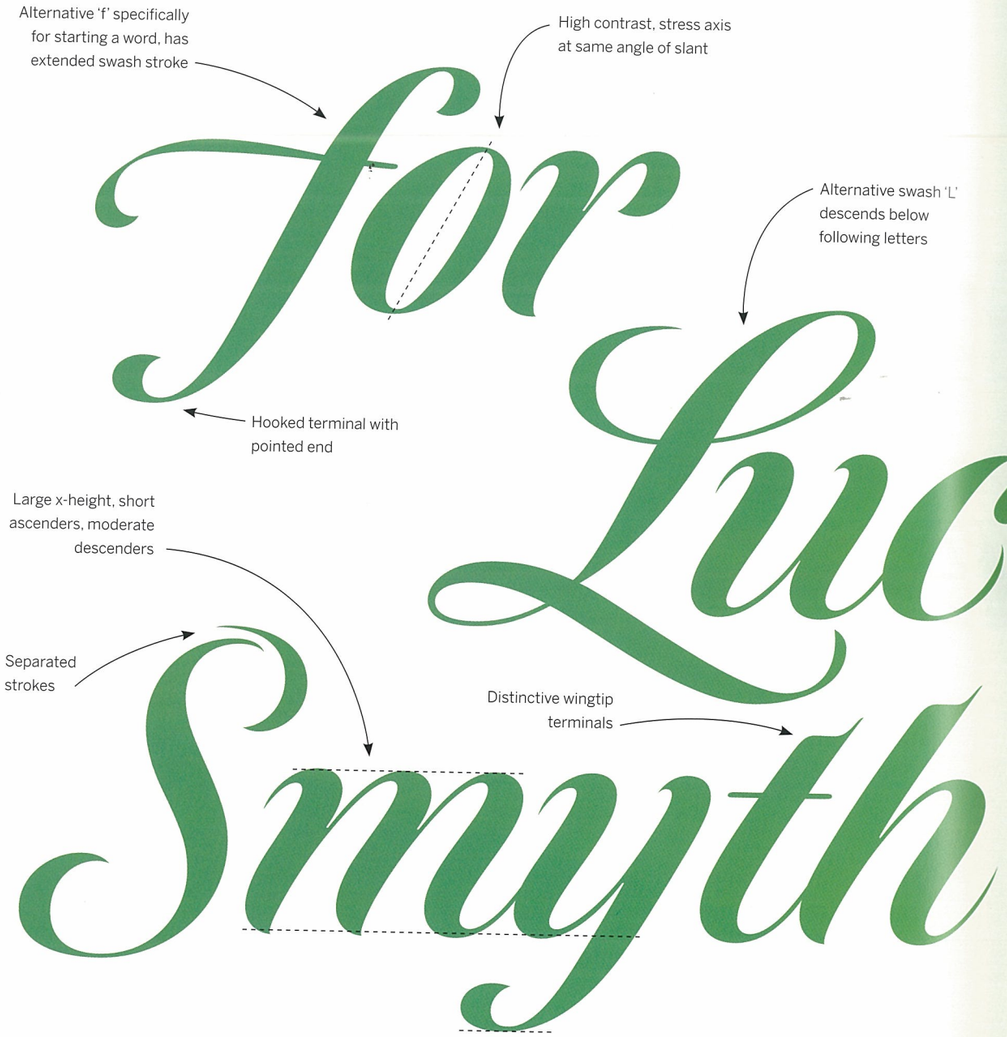
Tangier

Allographs

Zapfino

Tangier

Designer: Richard Lipton // **Foundry:** Font Bureau // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 2010 // **Classification:** Formal Script


Alternative 'f' specifically for starting a word, has extended swash stroke
High contrast, stress axis at same angle of slant
Alternative swash 'L' descends below following letters
Hooked terminal with pointed end
Large x-height, short ascenders, moderate descenders
Separated strokes
Distinctive wingtip terminals
for Lucille Smyth

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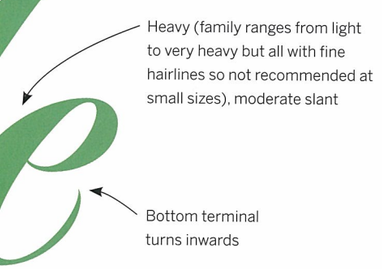
Tangier Bold


Heavy (family ranges from light to very heavy but all with fine hairlines so not recommended at small sizes), moderate slant
Bottom terminal turns inwards
Lucille

A decade after his **Bickham Script**, Richard Lipton followed up with **Tangier**. The new design continues to explore the possibilities of formal calligraphy but its much larger x-height offers more versatility in where the type can be used. Prior to its public release, it was used by *Glamour* magazine, which surely appreciated the spatial efficiency for its covers and section titles. Like Bickham, Tangier offers a variety of swashes, alternative letterforms and extender variants. There are also four weights, including a very dark Black. ***Good for:*** Occasions that require elegance, but don't leave much space for it.

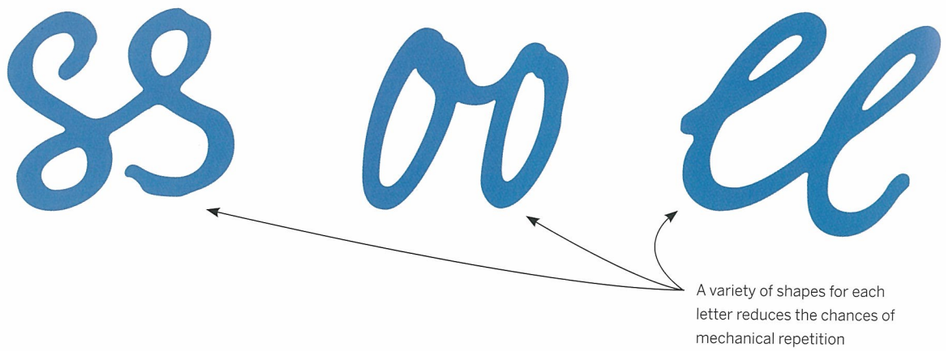
Compare to:

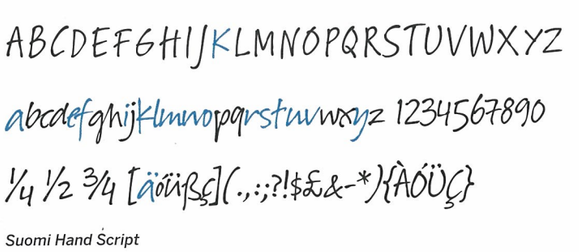
Bickham Script

Suomi Hand Script

Designer: Tomi Haaparanta // **Foundry:** Suomi // **Country of origin:** Finland
Release year: 2008 // **Classification:** Casual Script

Stroke weight varies, but contrast is usually low
Heavy when stroke begins, light as it lifts off paper
Large x-height, varying extenders
Kyllä, se on fontti – mutta kenenkään ei tarvitse tietää
There is a general alignment, but letters bounce along baseline as in natural handwriting
Connections emulate quick writing in which pen occasionally stays on paper between letters
Slant varies, simulating an informal writer





Suomi Hand Script

Designers often need a handwriting font to humanise a product, simulate notes, or simply communicate in a more personable tone. There are dozens that attempt to do this but fail for a variety of reasons: they are too perfect, too illegible, or have unnatural connections between letters. But most importantly, there are usually plenty of repeating lettershapes, exposing the fact that the text was not really handwritten. Now take a look at the sample above. There are some identical forms, but it takes a while to find them. **Suomi Hand Script** achieves this through hundreds of ligatures, connecting pairs and trios of letters in the way most of us do when we write. The strokes themselves are quite convincing too, with the natural rhythm of a person using a regular pen.

Compare to:

Kyllätarvitse

Comic Sans

Display

236 Nitti

238 **Ed Interlock**

240 **Bree**

242 Rumba

244 **Trade Gothic Bold Condensed No.20**

246 Heroic Condensed

248 **Cabazon**

250 SangBleu

252 Marian

Background typefaces are Sang Bleu and Bree

Nitti

Designer: Pieter van Rosmalen // **Foundry:** Bold Monday // **Country of origin:** The Netherlands
Release year: 2008 // **Classification:** Monospaced Sans

Closed aperture, stroke ends nearly straight
Bar and base are same length
Very large bowl
Round glyphs slightly squared
Minimal contrast
Reconfigure
Straight leg
Horizontal terminals
Zero is distinguished from uppercase letter 'O' by centre dot (a slashed zero is also available)
Alternative flat-topped form
30%

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
12334567890 ¼ ½ ¾
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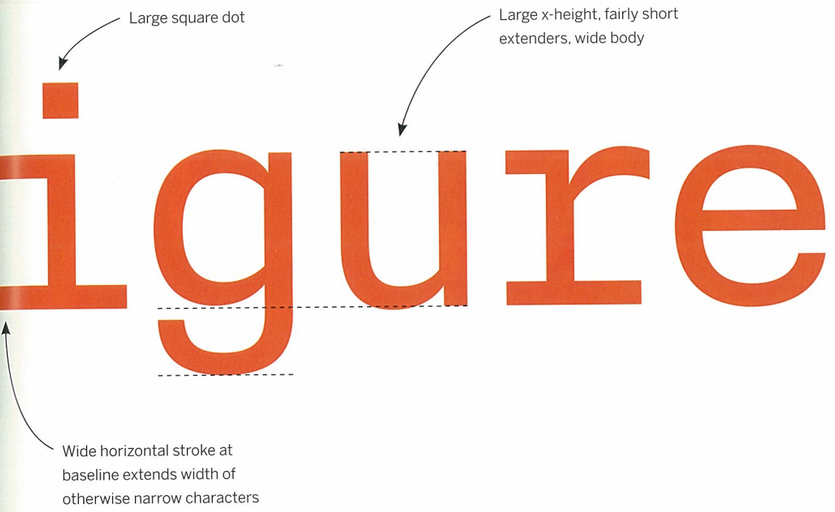
Nitti Basic Normal


Large square dot
Large x-height, fairly short extenders, wide body
Reconfigure
Wide horizontal stroke at baseline extends width of otherwise narrow characters

Designing a monospaced typeface (in which each character is the same width) is a tricky task. Creating one that contributes something new to the typographic canon is even more difficult. Most attempts come off looking like the hundreds of antique typewriter simulations or the awkward, strained artifacts of the computer age. Somehow, **Nitti** avoids both of these fates. Pieter van Rosmalen's typeface has a comfortable disposition that is rare in monospaced faces. It resolves the usual trouble spots (narrow 'M' and 'W', wide 'f', 'i', 'j' and 't') without making compromises to readability. In fact, Nitti has recently proven its effectiveness as the default font in iA Writer, the most popular word processor for the iPad.

Compare to:

MRSascrfge

Courier

MRSascrfge

Monaco

Ed Interlock

Designer: Ed Benguiat, Ken Barber, Tal Leming // **Foundry:** House Industries // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 2004 // **Classification:** Display

Unaligned counters defy the idea of a main stem. This design feels more like it was moulded from clay than built with conventional strokes
BENGUIAT
Large x-height, moderate extenders, narrow width and even more condensed with ligatures
Flared stroke, huge rounded square dot
Strong horizontal contrast
Magic!
Spiral form occupies as much negative space as possible

Ed Interlock is a highly successful collaboration between type legend Ed Benguiat and the popular foundry House Industries. It relives the whimsical lettering that appeared on cereal boxes and magazine ads of the 1950s and 60s – a lot of which was drawn by Ed himself. But the team didn't settle for a simple alphabet with an animated appearance; they practically animated the font. Using over 1,400 ligatures, Ed Interlock's uppercase letters duck and stretch to create a variety of compact word marks as you type. There is a delightful lowercase, too – it just doesn't have the same interlocking magic.

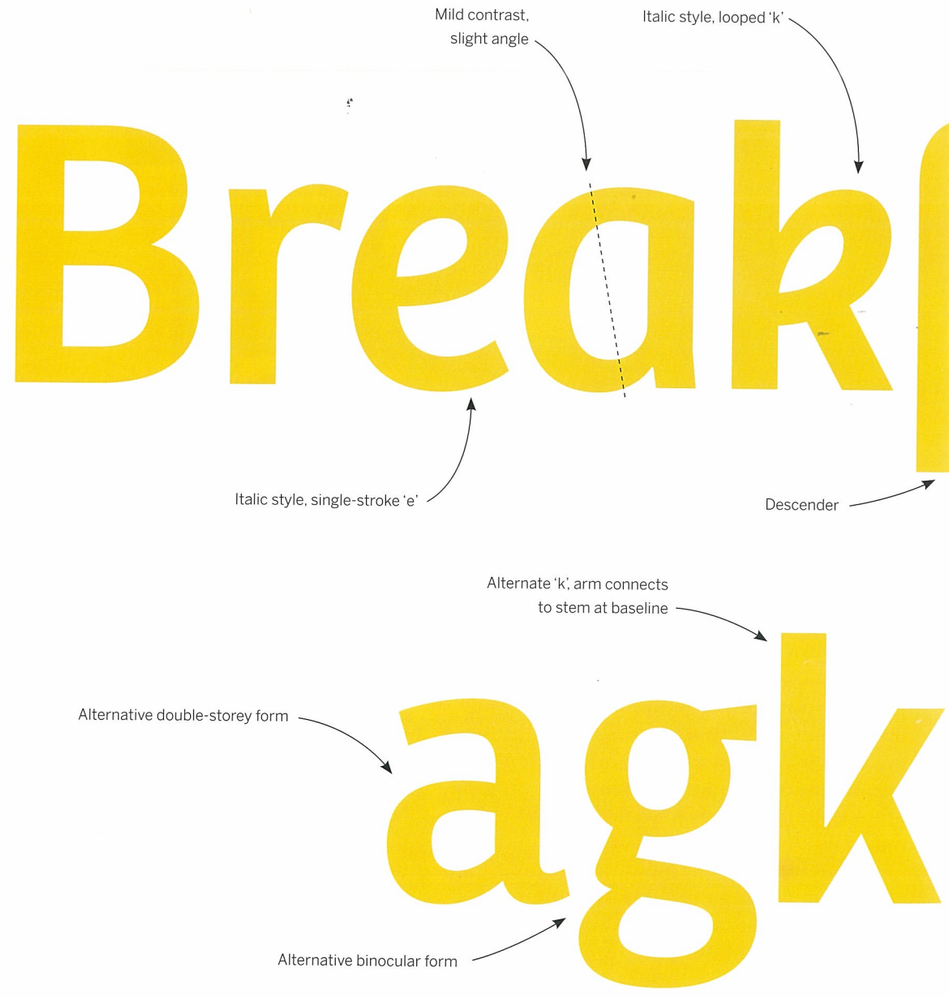
Compare to:

Benguiat

Antique Olive

Bree

Designer: Veronika Burian, José Scaglione // **Foundry:** TypeTogether // **Country of origin:** Czech Republic, Argentina
Release year: 2008 // **Classification:** Display/Humanist Sans



ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890 163

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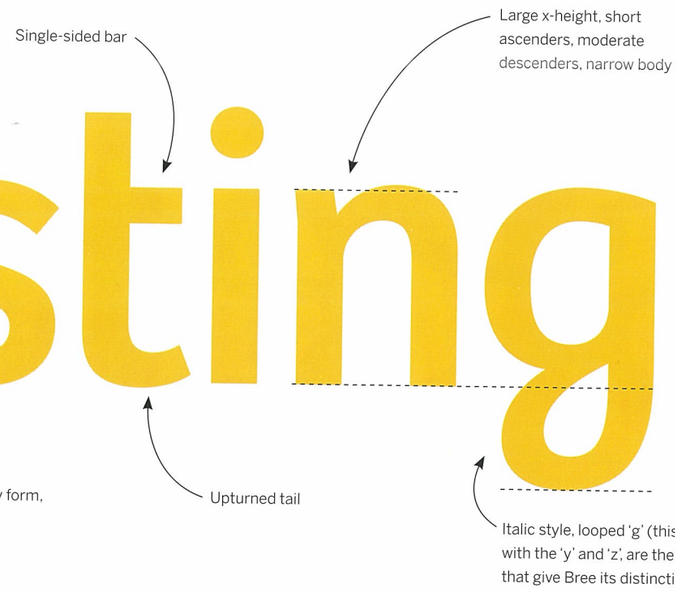
Bree Regular


Single-sided bar
Large x-height, short ascenders, moderate descenders, narrow body
Single-storey form, no spur
Upturned tail
Italic style, looped 'g' (this, along with the 'y' and 'z', are the glyphs that give Bree its distinctive look)

Bree is based on the logotype of TypeTogether, a collaboration between José Scaglione and Veronika Burian. The concept seems simple: take cursive forms ('a', 'e', 'f', 'v', 'w') that are normally leaning forward and push them upright. In less capable hands the result would be a disaster. Instead, Bree has won multiple design awards and the hearts of countless internet fans. The success is partly due to keeping quirks to a minimum and pairing the lowercase with a basic set of caps. But it also comes from a couple of very contagious characters: the closed-loop 'g' and 'y'. Handy bonus: there is a set of alternative forms that can fill in when a more conventional sans serif is desired. ***Good for:*** Cheerful headlines and branding.

Compare to:

Baetfkgl

FF Dax

Rumba

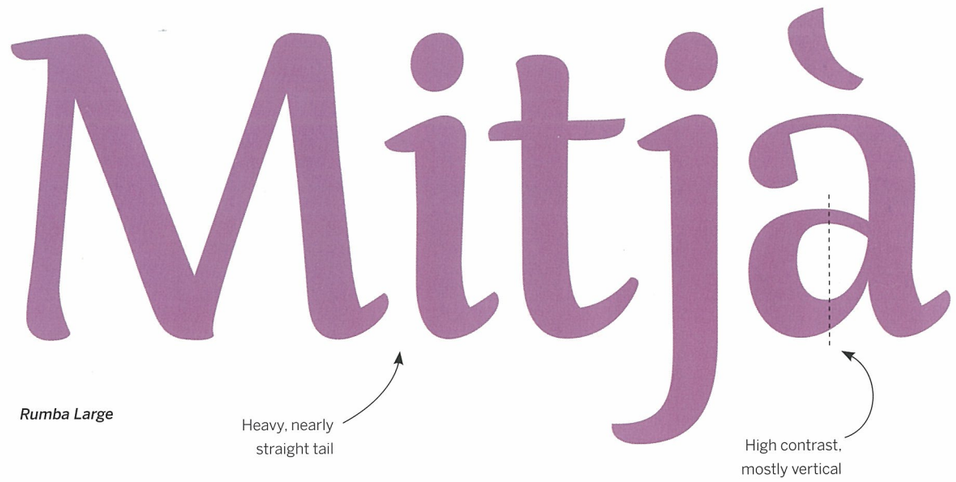
Designer: Laura Meseguer // **Foundry:** Type-Ø-Tones // **Country of origin:** Spain
Release year: 2005 // **Classification:** Display/Humanist Serif

Moderate contrast, slight angle
Nearly straight vertical stroke with slight curve at terminal
Petit
Straight, angled bar
Large x-height, narrow width, moderate extenders
Very high contrast, axis varies but mostly vertical
Gegant
Light, curved tail
Cursive form without straight bar

Rumba Extra

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890 163
¼ ½ ¾ [àóüßç](.,:;?!$£&-*){ÀÓÜÇ}

Rumba Small



Rumba Large

Laura Meseguer, a lettering artist and typeface designer from Barcelona, already had commercially successful fonts in her portfolio when she joined the Type and Media programme at the Royal Academy of Art (KABK) in The Hague. But the product of her studies demonstrates that she took her skills to a new level. **Rumba** is a three-font family that explores the idea of typeface variations optimised for a specific range of sizes, but also degrees of expressiveness. Rumba Small is an organic Text face with a strong calligraphic influence; Rumba Large is much looser, with contrast only suitable for headlines; Rumba Extra is the most active and irregular, a celebration of vibrant hand lettering. ***Good for:*** Publications and packaging with a Latin or ebullient vibe.

Compare to:

GRaegkls

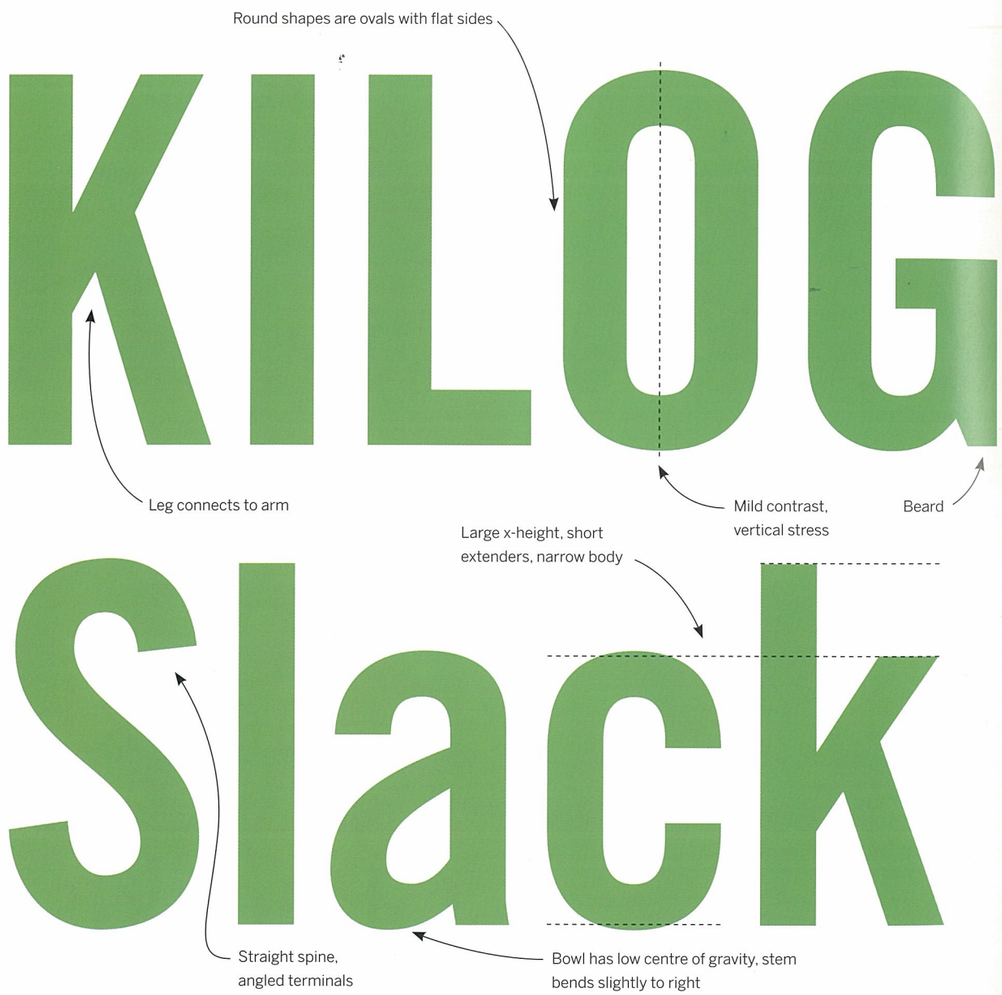
Doko

GRaegkls

Cronos

Trade Gothic Bold Condensed No.20

Designer: Jackson Burke // **Foundry:** Linotype // **Country of origin:** United States
Release years: 1948–1960 // **Classification:** Display/Gothic Sans


Round shapes are ovals with flat sides
KILOGRAM
Leg connects to arm
Mild contrast, vertical stress
Beard
Large x-height, short extenders, narrow body
Slack
Straight spine, angled terminals
Bowl has low centre of gravity, stem bends slightly to right

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890

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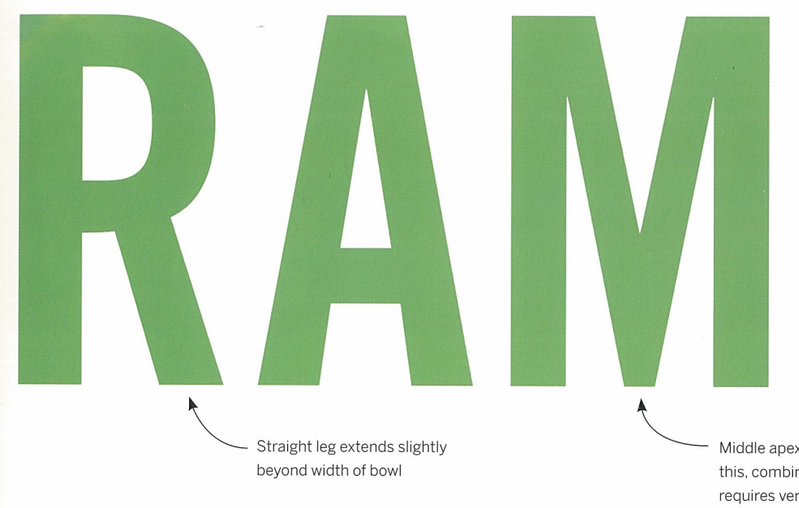
Trade Gothic Bold Condensed No.20


Straight leg extends slightly beyond width of bowl
Middle apex rests on baseline – this, combined with narrow width, requires very light diagonal strokes

Designed in the mid-20th century, **Trade Gothic** is Linotype's response to ATF's **News Gothic**, which came about fifty years earlier. Like its forebear, Trade Gothic had a range of styles and weights that were quite inconsistent, including a Bold and Bold Condensed (No.20) that had flat sides, unlike the rest of the family. These two styles have become increasingly popular for setting tightly packed headlines – made possible by the design's verticality – or emphasising words in strong contrast to other text. Alternate Gothic, a relative of the Franklin Gothic family, offers three widths but Trade Gothic Bold Condensed No.20 packs the most punch. ***Good for:*** A sturdy, down-to-earth appeal – robust, but economical.

Compare to:

RGOMA lance

FF DIN Condensed

RGOMA lance

Heroic Condensed

Heroic Condensed

Designer: Silas Dilworth // **Foundry:** TypeTrust // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 2008 // **Classification:** Display/Neo-Grotesque/Geometric Sans

Horizontal terminals
Ascenders about same height as capitals
Minimal contrast
Schleswighöfen
Nearly straight spine, slightly lighter in stroke weight, upper terminal is nearly at x-height
Large bowl extends beyond midpoint of stem
KGR
Arm and leg meet at midpoint of stem
No beard, bar near vertical centre
Straight leg extends slightly beyond width of bowl

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890

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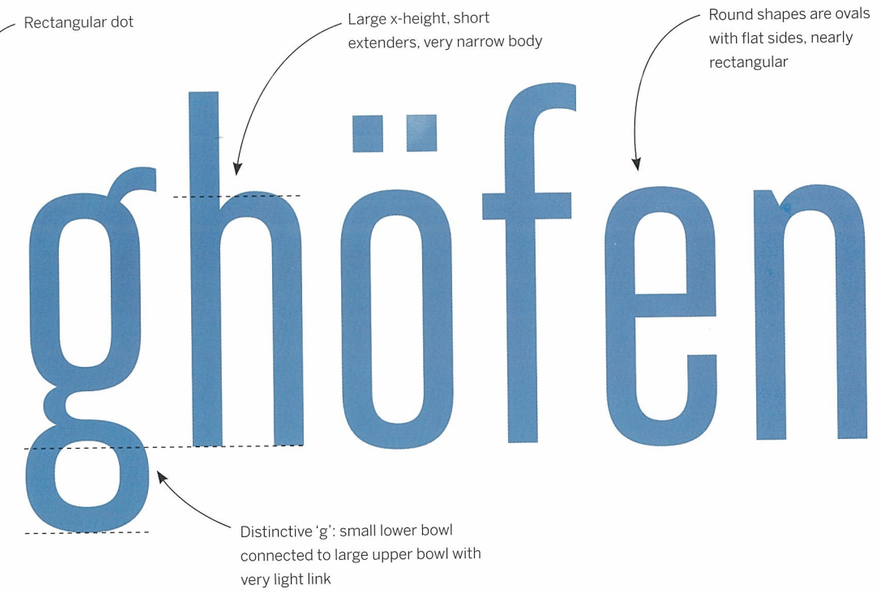
Heroic Condensed Regular


Rectangular dot
Large x-height, short extenders, very narrow body
Round shapes are ovals with flat sides, nearly rectangular
Schleswighöfen
Distinctive 'g': small lower bowl connected to large upper bowl with very light link

Heroic Condensed saves space. Despite its name, it does so in a very straightforward, unassuming way, making it a very versatile typeface for any kind of content. While there are many Grotesque or Geometric megafamilies (such as **Univers**, Helvetica or **Futura**) that include a token compressed style or two, Heroic was conceived from the beginning as a narrow typeface. In this way it avoids any of the design compromises often made to unify a large family. With eight weights and the newly added compressed width, it's a handy toolset for all those projects with a vertical orientation: publications, advertising, packaging or even the standard credit lines at the bottom of film posters.

Compare to:

GRKaegst

Trade Gothic Bold Condensed No.20

GRKaegst

FF DIN Condensed

Cabazon

Designer: Jim Parkinson // **Foundry:** Parkinson Type Design // **Country of origin:** United States
Release year: 2005 // **Classification:** Blackletter/Textura

Uppercase letters that are typically narrow in roman type are wider due to 'stems' made with two strokes, one curved and one straight
The few horizontal strokes have angled ends
The El
Stems end in angled feet
Very thin bar indicates angle of broad-nib pen
Angled stroke in lieu of dot
Au Sitä
Descending swash

AbCDEfGHIJKLmnOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890

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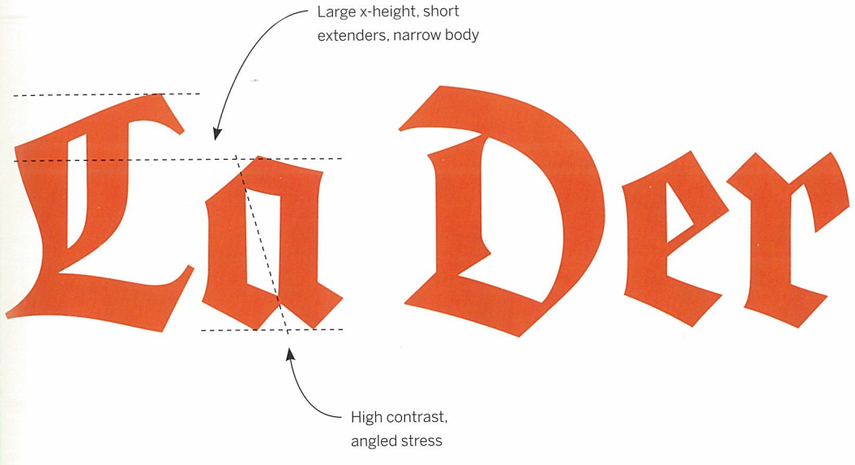
Cabazon Regular


Large x-height, short extenders, narrow body
La Der
High contrast, angled stress
Diamond strokes for umlauts and punctuation

Perhaps because of its age, perhaps due to its association with Gutenberg, or maybe simply because it's not used anymore except for certificates, official proclamations and newspaper logos, blackletter has come to represent a certain reverence and antiquity. There are various forms, such as the French/Flemish Bâtarde, or the German Schwabacher and Fraktur, but the style familiar to most modern-day readers is Textura (colloquially – and inaccurately – called Old English). Yet most Textura typefaces still aren't very legible to a public accustomed to roman letterforms. **Cabazon** alleviates that issue by keeping things fairly informal and free of ornamentation. It has a subtle hand-lettering quality, like much of Jim Parkinson's work.

Compare to:

AQest

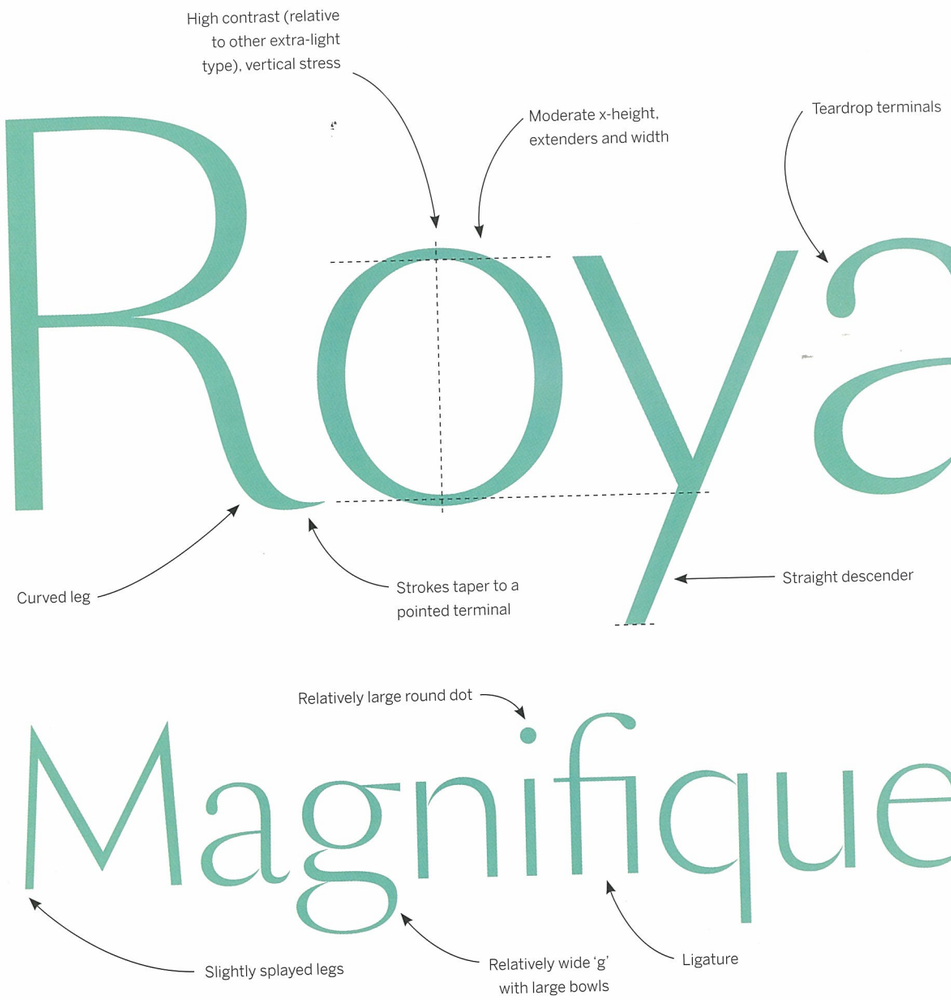
Fette Fraktur

AQest

Old English

SangBleu

Designer: Ian Party // **Foundry:** B+P Swiss Typefaces // **Country of origin:** Switzerland
Release year: 2008 // **Classification:** Display/Humanist Sans



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abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890
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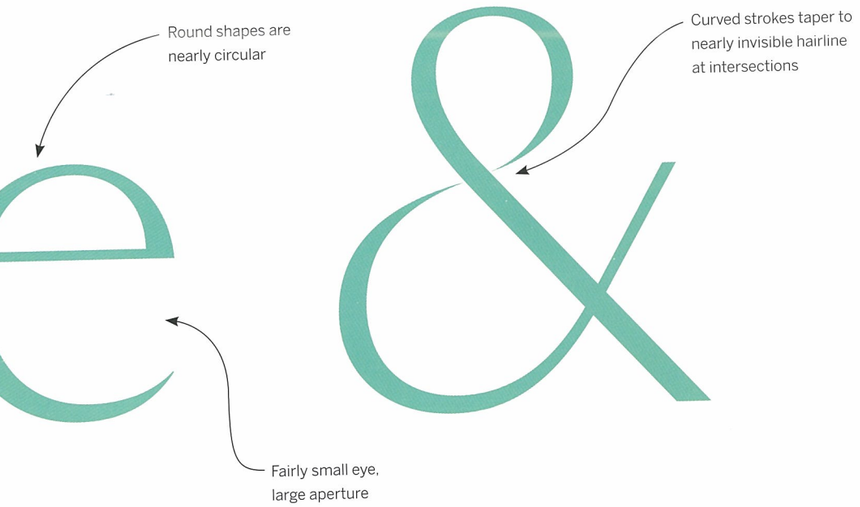
SangBleu Sans Light


Round shapes are nearly circular
Curved strokes taper to nearly invisible hairline at intersections
&
Fairly small eye, large aperture

If there's one thing we've learned from the label on a perfume bottle or the glossy pages of a fashion magazine, it's that very thin type is stylish and sophisticated. Somehow, once you move a couple levels lighter than a standard 'light' weight, everything on the page becomes chic and refined. The Swiss foundry B+P takes that principle to even more elegant extremes with their **SangBleu** family, a sans and serif based on a 17th- and 18th-century French type called Romain du Roi. SangBleu is just heavy enough, with just enough contrast to expose some delicately undulating curves. It's a very sexy type and a worthy replacement for the dated **Optima**.

Compare to:

GMRaegs

Optima

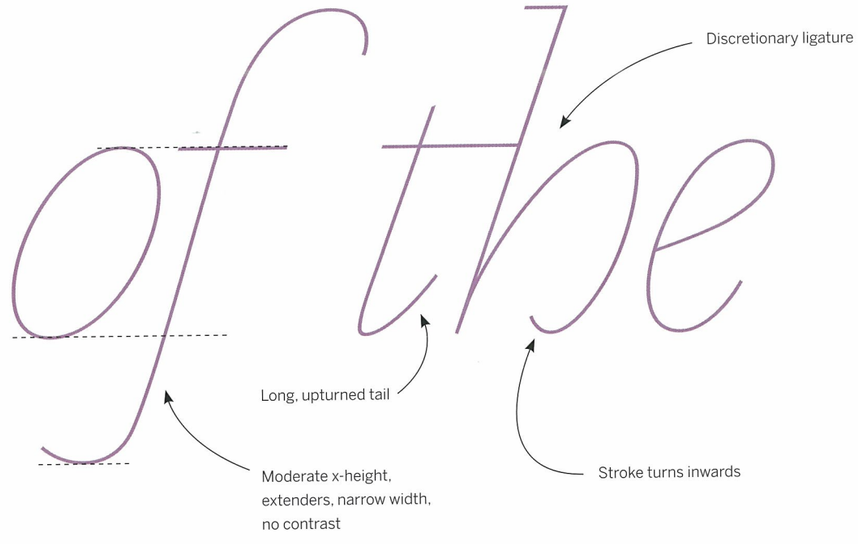
Marian

Designer: Paul Barnes // **Foundry:** Commercial Type // **Country of origin:** United Kingdom, United States
Release year: 2012 // **Classification:** Display/Humanist Sans

Marian 1554 Italic

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz &st 1234567890 163
1/4 2/3 5/8 [àóüßç](.,:;?!$£&-*){ÀÓÜÇ}

Marian 1554 Roman



Paul Barnes's concept for **Marian** is a fascinating study of history and typeface design. Always interested in the possibilities of thin, monolinear strokes, he used them to explore several classics, including the works of Fleischmann, Fournier, **Baskerville** and Bodoni. The experiments peel away the skin and muscle of the letters to reveal their bones, reintroducing us to the underlying structure that helps define each style but that is often hidden by weight and contrast. Marian 1554 is the classic combination of Garamond's roman and Granjon's italic, coupled with a batch of swashes in a mode like you've never seen swashes before. If only every research project could produce such beautiful and useful results.

Compare to:

Makefr

Garamond Premier

Makefr

Cronos

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Stephen Coles

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Further Reading

Beier, Sofie. *Reading Letters: Designing for Legibility*. Amsterdam: BIS, 2012
An overview of the decisions a typeface designer can make, and how those decisions affect the performance of their designs in different settings.

FontShop USA. "FontShop.com Glossary" http://www.fontshop.com/glossary/
A thorough glossary of typographic terminology.

Kupferschmid, Indra. http://kupferschrift.de/cms/2012/03/on-classifications/ "Type Classifications Are Useful, but the Common Ones Are Not." Weblog post. Kupferschrift. 31 Mar. 2012.
An excellent essay on the pros and cons of historical typeface classification systems, along with some practical solutions for organising and labelling type today.

Noordzij, Gerrit. *The Stroke: Theory of Writing*. Trans. Peter Enneson. London: Hyphen, 2005
The construction of letters explained through their origins in writing. For many, Noordzij's theory is the basis of typeface design.

Spiekermann, Erik and Ginger, E. M. *Stop Stealing Sheep & Find out How Type Works*. Berkeley, CA: Adobe, 2003.
Now that you know your typefaces, this is one of the best books for learning how to use them.

Van Blokland, Erik. http://typecooker.com/parameters.html "TypeMedia TypeCooker: Parameters."
TypeCooker is a drawing exercise for type design students at the Royal Academy of Arts in The Hague. Its list of parameters offers a good summary of the variety of visual traits found in typefaces.

Updated information and online resources will be posted periodically at: http://typographica.org/anatomy

Stephen Coles is a writer and typographer. After six years as creative director at FontShop in San Francisco, he now edits the websites *Typographica*, *Fonts In Use* and *The Mid-Century Modernist*. Stephen is a regular contributor to *Print* and *Codex* magazines, a Type Camp instructor and a member of the FontFont TypeBoard. He also contributed editorial content to the most recent edition of *FontBook: Digital Typeface Compendium*.

Erik Spiekermann founded MetaDesign, Germany's largest design firm, in 1979 and FontShop in 1989; he now runs the design agency Edenspiekermann.

Other titles of interest

HANDMADE TYPE WORKSHOP
Techniques for Creating Original Characters and Digital Fonts
Charlotte Rivers
With 450 colour illustrations

THE COMPLETE TYPOGRAPHER
A Foundation Course for Graphic Designers Working with Type
Will Hill
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Michael Wörgötter
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